Walsall & Willenhall
CHRONICLE
Thursday, March 15, 2018 | Read by more than 78,000 people | Price when sold 70p

£125,000 asking price for former council building and block

VILLAGE TOILETS UP FOR AUCTION

Report by Richard Guttridge

A DISUSED public toilet block in Walsall has gone up for sale – paving the way for potential redevelopment of the site.

The toilets and adjoining semi-detached house are set to be auctioned off later this month and carry an asking price of £125,000.

Property experts say the block, on Norton Road, a short distance from Pelsall Common, could potentially be bulldozed or kept for its current use.

The property next to it, which was formerly used as a council neighbourhood office – as well as a library, prior to the completion of a new building in the village – would also be included in any sale.

Land next to the toilets is also part of the plot, providing extra room for potential development.

The toilets have been left in a run-down state having been shut for the last few years.

Hopeful

They will be included in an auction by SDL Bigwood at Aston Villa Football Club later this month.

Pelsall councillor Marco Longhi, who is also the Mayor of Walsall, said he was hopeful a buyer would be found for the properties.

He said: "The properties have been left unoccupied for quite some time now, in fact a number of years.

"It would be far better to see the properties but to good use and benefit the community as a whole. Given they were council properties perhaps they could have been put to use for the community.

"Anything that can benefit the community, even just in appearance terms by way of redevelopment, is better than leaving them languishing empty and deteriorating."

Dozens of properties are expected to be snapped up at the auction at Villa Park on March 28.

Advertising the sale, SDL Bigwood said: "The property may be suitable for continuation of its existing use or a number of alternative uses including that of residential development subject to obtaining the necessary planning consents."

YOUNGSTERS COOK UP A STORM IN CHEF CONTEST

Young chef of the year, from left, runner-up Ryan Richards, Brian Reilly from the Rotary, winner Amy Hayes, head chef Steve Briggs and third, Caitlin Bunn

YOUNGSTERS got a taste for life as a top chef as they took part in a special competition for Walsall schools.

Staff at The Littleton, Walsall College's restaurant, hosted the final of the Young Chef of the Year competition, with nine secondary school youngsters pitting their culinary skills against each other.

The annual competition run by the Rotary Club of Aldridge, saw the 11-17-year-olds thrown in the mix, going head-to-head to prepare two healthy dishes of their choice.

Participants were from a number of schools across Walsall, including Barr Beacon School, Aldridge School, Streetly Academy and St Francis of Assisi.

Two cooking competitions were held. Students aged 11-14 took part in the junior competition, whilst the senior competition was open to budding chefs aged over 14.

Judges deliberated on their scoring and provided constructive feedback to all contestants. A presentation followed, where the winner and runners-up received a certificate and a cash prize. The winner was 14-year-old Amy Hayes, from St Francis of Assisi, and as part as her prize, her impressive toffee pudding will be included in The Littleton's dessert menu.

Runner-up Ryan Richards, 12, came in second place and Streetly Academy student Caitlin Bunn, also 12, was placed in third.

Steve Biggs, Commercial Chef at The Littleton, said: " The competition enabled aspiring chefs to demonstrate their abilities to professionals and build upon their skills through the feedback they receive.

"Participants prepared a range of beautifully-made dishes that wouldn't look out of place in a restaurant."

Saddlers hunt for new boss

Whitney

WALSALL are searching for a new manager after sacking Jon Whitney.

The 47-year-old was relieved of his duties at the Banks's Stadium on Monday afternoon following crunch talks with the Saddlers board.

It is understood a mixture of poor results as well as Whitney's deteriorating relationship with the club's fans convinced the Walsall hierarchy to act.

Whitney first took charge of first-team affairs on an interim basis in March 2016 and guided the team to a third-placed finish in League One. The former Hull and Lincoln defender was then appointed permanent manager on a three-year deal, despite his team being beaten by Barnsley in the play-offs.

● **Front runners – back page**

SHOWBIZ

Tributes for Doddy, king of comedy

TRIBUTES have poured in for one of the last of a golden generation of entertainers, Ken Dodd. While he may have been a Liverpudlian, he was revered as though he was one of the Black Country's own as he clocked up hundreds of hours on stages across the region, including Walsall Town Hall.

Reg Summerfield, a former entertainment agent, from Bilston, also paid tribute: "I met him on a number of occasions. He was a jolly man – that's the way he lived his life."

He died at his home on Sunday. He had married Anne Jones, his partner of 40 years, last Friday.

RETAIL

Speed humps plan

SPEED humps are set to be added to a road outside a supermarket in Brownhills. The safety measures will be brought in on Silver Street outside Tesco. Highways bosses are keen to ensure drivers slow down on the road leading to the store car park. Three sets of humps would be added.

INSIDE
SNOW STOPPING NHS HERO JON

PAGE 5

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Handbag snatch mum of four jailed

Jailed – Catherine Johnson

A MOTHER-of-four who badly hurt an 86-year-old woman while snatching the victim's handbag has been jailed for four years. Callous Catherine Johnson deliberately targeted the pensioner after spotting her walking with a stick, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

The 31-year-old robber struck from behind, sending the elderly woman crashing face first to the ground with a push in the back, said Miss Joanne Barker, prosecuting. Johnson then snatched the handbag and fled leaving the victim, who had gamely tried to hang on to her property, with serious facial injuries. Passers-by, alerted by the car horns of motorists who had witnessed the February 6 robbery, gave chase. The defendant was cornered and caught by several members of the public who held onto her until police reached the scene. The stolen handbag and its contents were recovered.

Miss Barker said Johnson tested positive for drugs. The victim's injuries included a broken nose, cut lip, black eye, other facial cuts and bruises together with damage to an elbow. She is still receiving treatment and has also suffered significant psychological damage.

Johnson, from Keates Road, Willenhall, pleaded guilty to robbery and was sentenced by Judge Michael Challinor who told her the victim had suffered serious psychological harm as well as physical injury and was now too frightened to leave her home for the first time in her life.

The Judge said he felt sorry for the defendant's four children but added: "You knew she was elderly and infirmed but continued with the robbery even though she had fallen to the ground. People on drugs who attack the elderly are shown very little mercy."

CCTV call as town centre vehicle crimes up by 30

OPPORTUNISTIC thieves have been targeting vehicles in Walsall town centre more than twice a day, prompting calls for improved CCTV.

There were 73 reports of 'vehicle crime' within a one-mile radius of the town centre in January this year, according to police figures – a rise of 30 from the same period in 2017 when 43 incidents were recorded.

In 2016, 44 were reported in the same area. Officers are now introducing extra patrols after a significant 'spike' in offences.

Sergeant Mo Khalid, whose team covers the area, said there had been a rise in 'opportunists' targeting insecure vehicles.

"We have seen a spike in vehicle crime offences recently," he said.

"Many of these offences are committed by opportunists from vehicles that have been left insecure so we would urge motorists to always lock doors and remove any valuables, bags and coats from view.

Support

"We are working with roads policing colleagues on a plan to get additional police patrol resources into the town centre to support local officers on the lookout for thieves and anyone who may be travelling into the town to commit offences.

"West Midlands Police also employ various proactive tactics to catch vehicle crime offenders, including deploying 'capture cars' across the region, which are fitted with hidden CCTV cameras, microphones and silent alarms which alert police officers to an intruder."

Councillor Mike Bird, leader of the Conservative opposition group at Walsall Council, said the figures highlighted a need for better CCTV, and called on owners to be more alert.

He added: "This is more of a reason as to why we need an upgraded CCTV system. But importantly people need to be more careful."

Saddlers players go back to school

Walsall players Amadou Bakayoko and George Dobson, for a Q&A session at Goldsmith Primary Academy

WALSALL players Amadou Bakayoko and George Dobson went back to school to meet pupils at a local primary. Goldsmith Primary Academy in Goldsmith Road welcomed the Saddlers players for the afternoon this week.

The school, which is part of the Windsor Academy Trust (WAT), saw the stars hold a Q&A session with Key Stage Two pupils as well as handing out signed photos to the youngsters.

Adrian Hickman, assistant headteacher at Goldsmith Primary Academy, said: "It was fantastic to have the footballers visiting the children, and to speak to them about being ambitious and aiming high.Speaking to George and Amadou also fulfils one of our 11 WAT pledges to students – meeting a famous person before they leave the school, as we strive to unlock their personal and academic potential."

Walsall FC Community Programme staff also work at Goldsmith Primary Academy, delivering PE lessons and extra-curricular activities. Paul Larvin, manager for education at Walsall FCCP, added: "It was great for the players to share some of their experiences and advice with the youngsters at Goldsmith.

"We hope meeting the footballers inspired the children, and encourages them to work hard both at school and throughout their life."

£2k grants to help schools from M6 Toll operators

THE operators of the M6 Toll are launching their Schools Foundation Scheme this year, which will see thousands of pounds handed over for pupils to benefit from.

During the academic year of 2018-2019, the Midland Expressway Ltd (MEL) Schools Foundation panel will award three grants of £2,000 to primary schools in the area.

The application process for funding opens this month, and MEL are urging schools to make their submissions before the deadline date of May 11.

The scheme allows primary schools a chance to access funds for projects and activities that normal school funding cannot provide. From learning to life experiences, the Schools Foundation enables MEL to play a part in nurturing and creating opportunity for young people to develop their talents.

Representatives from MEL recently revisited Chasetown Community School in Burntwood who were awarded funding through last year's scheme to see first-hand how the money has benefitted their students. The school put forward an application to install a polytunnel to enable students to grow their own produce all year round and provide an outside classroom area.

£221,000 bank fraudsters jailed

TWO fraudsters who stole funds worth over £221,000 to fund their lavish lifestyles have been locked up for a total of six years.

Former bank employees Mansoor Sanobar, of Lord Street, Walsall, and Abdul Khan, of Heather Avenue, Walsall, used the money to pay for holidays as well as to go towards funding home improvements.

A plastic bag containing £11,360, and gold bar bullion worth £2,196 were found in Mr Khan's home.

Mr Sanobar pleaded guilty to money laundering and received a prison sentence of two years and 11 months while Mr Khan pleaded guilty to committing fraud by abuse of position and received a prison sentence of three years and two months at Birmingham

Gas mains renewal works spark delays

DELAYS are likely for drivers as Hartill Street, Willenhall, shut for gas main renewal for nearly three weeks, at the junction of B4590 for 24 hours, until March 30. Balfour Beatty Utility Solutions Ltd will be carrying out the works on behalf of Cadent Gas.

Thief chased from shop after making off with cash

A ROBBER who pushed a woman to one side and grabbed cash she had just withdrawn from a city centre post office was chased by other shoppers as he fled.

And although former Walsall man Farooq Ali managed to break free, he was caught by a police officer who cycled after him, a court heard. Ali, aged 48, now of Boston Place in Coventry, was jailed for two years after he pleaded guilty to robbing his victim.

Prosecutor Madhu Rai said that at about 5pm on February 7 a woman who was just days away from her 60th birthday withdrew £500 from the Post Office in the WH Smith store in the West Orchards shopping centre in Coventry.

She put the cash on top of her shopping trolley while she took out her wallet to put the money in. But as she was about to do so, she was pushed to one side by the defendant, and he grabbed what he could of the money, about £110, and ran out of the store.

The court heard that Ali had convictions for 56 offences, mainly thefts, and one for robbery back in 1999, but had been out of trouble from 2009 until last year. His barrister Mr Simon Hunka said he would not have known his victim was vulnerable.

He was jailed for five years in 2009 for drug offences but when he came out he was offered a job in Coventry as a tyre fitter so moved from Walsall.

Ales from around world at festival

BEER and cider enthusiasts can enjoy up to 25 real ales and five ciders from the UK and overseas during a 12-day festival at two pubs in Walsall.

St Matthew's Hall in Lichfield Street, Walsall and The Bloxwich Showman in High Street, Bloxwich, have each sourced beers and cider from brewers in Greece, Italy, Australia, Canada, the US, Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland.

The festival began yesterday, Wednesday, and runs until Sunday, March 25, inclusive. It will feature a selection of beers brewed exclusively for the festival. All beers and ciders will be priced at £2.15 a pint.

St Matthew's Hall manager, Michael O'Callighan, said: "Many of the beers on offer have not been available

Pub refurb jobs

A PUB is undergoing a six-figure refurbishment, creating 10 jobs in the process. Hussey Arms on Chester Road North closed recently and a dining area extension will be completed before it reopens on March 21.

Law firm chooses blind charity to back

David Evans, right, at the charity's base

WALSALL-BASED leading Law Firm, Enoch Evans LLP have revealed its charity of the year for 2018 and opted to keep it local.

Walsall Society for the Blind, neighbours to Enoch Evans LLP on Hatherton Road said they are delighted to have been selected and will now benefit from the fundraising events carried out by Enoch Evans LLP during the year.

Amanda Reed, CEO for Walsall Society for the Blind said: "We are all so grateful to Enoch Evans LLP for selecting us as their charity of the year and look forward to assisting them in the many events they have planned to raise money for our charity."

"Walsall Society for the Blind is a local charity that has provided a lifeline to the visually impaired since 1885. Deemed as Walsall's oldest charity, their aim is to provide information, support and friendship to those who suffer from visual impairment."

David Evans, Managing Director at Enoch Evans LLP said, "Charity of the Year is something new that we have decided to start for 2018. We wish to focus our efforts on raising as much as possible and making a difference, the opportunity to do it for a cause so close to ourselves and for the local community makes it all that more, worthwhile."

"We look forward to an exciting year of fundraising and giving something back."

Please contact Enoch Evans LLP on (01922) 720333, ee@enoch-evans.co.uk or log on at www.enoch-evans.co.uk for details. For more information about Walsall Society for the Blind visit www.walsallblind.org

Boxers are a knockout to help Isabella appeal

SHE is fighting for her life and there are few people better equipped to give Isabella Lyttle's fundraising a bit more punch than the boxing brothers Martin and Darren Gethin.

The pair helped put on a knockout show at the Tesco store in Littleton Street, Walsall by throwing their weight behind the campaign to collect the £200,000 needed to send the courageous cancer sufferer to America for vital treatment.

The 10-year-old from Walsall is battling cancer and options for treatment in this country are running out after she suffered a third devastating relapse last year.

Isabella, now fighting her fourth bout of cancer, was first diagnosed with Neuroblastoma, a particularly complex form of the disease, at the age of three. The resilience shown by her since then has won the hearts of many.

Martin Gethin, a 34-year-old father of two who retired from the ring last year after holding both the British and English lightweight titles and winning the International Boxing Federation championship at both lightweight and super lightweight, said: "I won titles but judging by the fight she has put up she could take on the world. Her plight is particularly touching for me because I have children of my own. I cannot imagine what her parents are going through."

His brother Darren, 41, who also lives in Walsall and held British Masters and Midlands Area titles while being ranked in the Top 10 for the Best KO of the Year before retiring, added: "I was a tough guy in the ring but I wish I had been as strong as her. We will do all we can to ensure she wins this fight."

Frank Bruno and the team behind former world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury have also offered their support to the campaign to get the near £200,000 it is estimated it would cost to fly Isabella to America for treatment not available in this country .

Her mother Jenni explained: "They keep giving her different treatments but they have only provided remission for a short time. We want to find the treatment that knocks out the disease for good."

Walsall boxing brothers Darren and Martin Gethin take on the chin from Isabella at Walsall's Tesco

Lucky school may be flying to Spain

FIVE schools have been shortlisted to win a place for an entire class to enjoy a break abroad.

Jet2holidays' Ultimate School Trip to Sol Katmandu Park & Resort in Majorca has selected two from the Black Country and three from Birmingham.

Ormiston SWB Academy in Wolverhampton and Aldridge School in Walsall, along with King Edward VI Five Ways School, and St Paul's School and Hartshill School, both in Nuneaton, are among 45 shortlisted in total. Each shortlisted school is also receiving £1,000 in school equipment vouchers.

One school from each region will be chosen after a public vote on the company's social media channels.

All the schools produced entries from posters to promotional videos.

They were chosen by celebrity judge, Emmerdale and Hollyoaks TV star Anthony Quinlan.

Votes can be cast until March 19 to help the winning school secure their place in the sun by going to the website, ultimateschooltrip.jet2holidays.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

Women paid less at Walsall Council

WOMEN working at Walsall Council are paid over 10 per cent less an hour than men, figures have revealed.

The most recent data, at March 31, 2017, shows that the average hourly rate of pay for women employed by the council was 11.36 per cent lower than men. It is the first year all employers in Great Britain with more than 250 staff are required to publish their organisation's pay gap data.

Councillor Keith Chambers said: "Gender pay gap analysis provides a valuable point of reference for employers and is something that the council has been undertaking for a number of years."

Armed robber in attack on cashier

A ROBBER targeted a Walsall newsagents armed with a gun and an unknown spray. The man, believed to be in his 30s, entered News and Booze in Ablewell Street, to buy cigarettes – but sprayed the cashier in the face with the substance and punched him.

He then pulled a handgun on the cashier and customers before leaving the shop with no-one seriously injured.

The man wore a light grey hoody with a black zip, black jeans and dark-coloured trainers at the time of the attack last Tuesday evening.

Railway bridge teens arrested

TWO teenagers have been arrested after youths were seen throwing stones from a Great Wyrley railway bridge, forcing a train to stop.

Police rushed to scene following reports that teenagers were throwing stones from the bridge onto the A34 and Lodge Lane, Great Wyrley and had trespassed onto the line, bringing a train to a standstill. Staffordshire Police and British Transport Police found and detained two boys aged 14 and 16, who both live in the Walsall area. Both have been released under investigation whilst enquiries go on.

Ramblers off to the country for walk

THE Walsall Group of the Ramblers will be heading to Feckenham for a 7.5 mile circular walk on Saturday.

This is a walk through 'Archers' country on footpaths, tracks and country lanes Non-members are always welcome and can obtain more information from the walk leader on 0121 440 7929

More information about the Walsall Group is available on the website www.walsallramblers.org.uk.

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COUNTY NEWS

Fire service bid caution urged

UKIP has urged caution over plans by the West Midlands super council to take over the region's fire service.

West Midlands Mayor Andy Street would have sole accountability for the governance of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service in the scheme.

But MEP James Carver said: "If this change goes ahead the Mayor will be responsible for the community safety plan, budgeting, setting the fire council tax precept and appointing the chief fire officer, who in turn, would be directly accountable to the Mayor. I fear there could be a democratic deficit and we need assurances this committee will have some powers of veto."

Ibstock profits fall as it invests

CLAY bricks and concrete products group Ibstock saw pre-tax profits fall despite rising sales last year.

Revenue at Ibstock, which has sites in Cannock and Walsall, rose by 3.9 per cent to £451.6 million with the profit figure down 24.7 per cent to £83.4m as it invested in additional UK brick capacity to meet demand.

Ibstock Brick was helped by good activity levels within the UK new build housing sector with brick volumes ahead year-on-year supported by stock reductions.

Replacement of the brick kiln at the Lodge Lane blue brick plant in Cannock is on schedule

PDSA in appeal to help sick animals

STAFF and volunteers at a charity shop are urging animal lovers to donate any unwanted items to help sick and injured pets.

The Wolverhampton PDSA shop, based inside the Mander Centre, is after CDs, DVDs, books and toys, as well as men's and ladies' clothing, shoes and accessories. Donations can be taken to the shop from Monday to Saturday, between 9am and 5pm.

Money raised will go towards PDSA-funded veterinary treatment.

Bobbie the builder – can she fix it?

NEARLY a third of UK homeowners would rather hire a female builder than a man, according to new research by the Federation of Master Builders.

The study into opinions on female builders and tradespeople saw 30 per cent say they would feel more positive about hiring a woman to complete a task, with one of the top considerations being they think a woman might be more respectful of their home.

Conman is told to pay victim £5k

A ROGUE trader who carried out unnecessary maintenance work on a property has been given a two-year suspended prison sentence.

Brian Hems, aged 44, of Buxton Close, Bloxwich, was also ordered to pay £5,000 in compensation to his victim.

Hems was sentenced for offences relating to laundering £34,250 in cheques from a single victim.

The prosecution followed an investigation by Staffordshire County Council's trading standards team.

In addition, Hems was ordered to pay £2,000 costs after pleading guilty to six counts of money laundering offences at Stoke Crown Court.

The unnecessary work had been carried out at a house in Tamworth, Staffordshire, in August 2016. Staffordshire County Council's communities leader Gill Heath said that it was a 'shocking' amount of money to have been paid by one victim for work on their property, which she added had been 'totally unnecessary'.

She added: "The victim's bank alerted police and our trading standards team. It was because of the large amount of money being paid out of their customer's account.

"This demonstrates how closer working between banks and the authorities is helping to catch criminals in the act. We are pleased with the result of this case.

"It sends out a strong message that our team will pursue any criminal activity. We would also ask people to be extremely wary of cold callers.

"They should seek three or more quotes for any work that may be needed on their homes."

Light at the end of tunnel for rail dream

Report by Alex Ross

'I'M not here on a whim – I'm here because I genuinely believe we have got to do this'

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling wants to give the Black Country's transport system lift-off with his backing for three major schemes.

In a whistle-stop tour of the region, Mr Grayling first arrived at the future site of Willenhall Railway Station, to be built as part of the reopening of passenger services between Wolverhampton and Walsall.

He then made the four-mile journey to Midland Metro's Wednesbury depot where he drove a new battery-powered tram, which will operate without overhead lines in Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

Finally, he headed to Brierley Hill town centre where he inspected the site of a planned terminus for trams on the planned Wednesbury to Dudley Midland Metro extension.

Opportunity

Speaking at the future Willenhall Station, off Bilston Street, Mr Grayling said: "I'm very committed to making sure we reopen some of the old freight routes in the West Midlands area.

"I think there is an opportunity to create better public transport by bringing back lines which were lost to passengers services a generation ago, but are actually needed today."

He was joined by West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, Walsall North MP Eddie Hughes and Walsall Council leader Sean Coughlan at the site. There is no timescale in place for the reopening of the line which closed down for passenger services in 1965, despite a 10-year period of a reintroduced service from 1998.

But money is available and has been earmarked for the scheme, according to Mr Street. He said the case was being put together with designs being drawn up for the two stations on the route – Willenhall and James Bridge in Darlaston – and a timetable was being discussed.

He said the stations would be 'efficient and practical' with a platform, shelters, parking and passenger information. He added: "The most important thing they [people] can look forward to is a direct line from Wolverhampton to Walsall."

At Brierley Hill, in Cottage Street, next to the Asda supermarket, Mr Grayling was joined by Dudley South MP Mike Wood and Dudley Council leader Patrick Harley.

It is where the Wednesbury to Dudley line, which follows a disused railway line for most of the way, will end.

There will be a total of 17 stations along the route, which will initially end at Merry Hill shopping centre in 2022. A £250m grant from the Government last year made the 11km-route a reality.

Mr Grayling said: "We are absolutely committed as a government and we have a great partnership with Andy Street in the West Midlands to deliver the right kind of transport system for the future. This Metro network is absolutely what the Birmingham and West Midlands needs, its a real opportunity to improve connections and to do so in a way which is quicker and easier than building new railway lines."

At Midland Metro's Wednesbury depot, Mr Grayling went inside and got in the driver's seat of a battery-powered tram.

It does not require overhead lines and is the first of its type in the country. The tram is still being tested, but is set to come into use when the Wolverhampton Metro extension to the city's railway station opens in two years.

West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, Walsall MP Eddie Hughes, Chris Grayling and council leader Sean Coughlan

New Look jobs under threat with closures

NEARLY 1,000 shop workers face the axe after struggling fashion chain New Look revealed plans to shut 60 stores as part of a rescue plan that will see the rent it pays slashed at nearly 400 more shops nationwide.

It is the latest victim of the slowdown on the high street that has already seen Toys R Us and Maplin collapse into administration, while a string of restaurant chains have been forced to announced closures.

With less money being spent on the high street New Look is having a tough time fending off cheaper rivals like Primark and the big supermarkets as well as online budget fashion stores like Asos.

Primark is doing particularly well and is opening its biggest-ever UK store at Birmingham's Pavilions shopping centre later this year.

But New Look has struggled amid a "challenged trading performance and a difficult retail environment" and has put together a rescue deal that will see it close 60 stores, including its Mens shop at Merry Hill – only opened two years ago and one of the first of its new menswear outlets.

It has also secured rent cuts at 393 of its remaining 533 UK shops – about two thirds – which will almost certainly include some of its local stores at Wolverhampton, Walsall, Cannock, West Bromwich, Dudley High Street and Halesowen, as well as its womenswear shop at Merry Hill.

The rescue deal is called a Company Voluntary Arrangement (CVA) and New Look says all the stores will remain open until its creditors – banks, suppliers and landlords – vote on the proposal on March 21.

Book swap boost for page turners

A HOUSING association has helped to keep a Walsall community reading. When the Beechdale estate's library was forced to close due to council funding cuts last year, staff from Friendship Care and Housing (FCH) stepped in to help.

The housing provider's community champion, Jemma Betts, alongside other members of staff and volunteers from the local church, created The Community Book Swap, based at the St Chad's Church Hall on Edison Road and open to the community every Saturday between 1 and 2pm.

For a donation of £1, visitors can borrow a maximum of three books.

To donate books to The Community Book Swap, please contact Jemma on 0300 123 1745 or email jemma.betts@longhurst-group.org.uk.

Jobs boost in town as new hotel is proposed

A NEW 60-bed hotel in Walsall is part of a big expansion by Travelodge this year which will create 550 jobs.

The expansion includes the budget hotel group's biggest new build to date – its new flagship 395-room hotel, London City Travelodge

In addition Travelodge is rolling out a further 400 super rooms across London and major UK cities.

The group expects to open 20 new hotels amounting to more than 1,900 rooms across the UK in 2018, expanding its network to 578 Travelodge hotels in the UK, Spain and Ireland.

These hotels are being developed by third party investors, with an approximate equivalent investment value of £240 million.

The new Walsall hotel is at Littleton Street West and the building programme also includes sites in Telford and Solihull.

Over the past five years, Travelodge has opened 78 new hotels which represents an investment value of more than £600 million for third party investors and has created 2,000 new jobs.

Peter Gowers, Travelodge's chief executive, said: "Despite the uncertainty caused by Brexit and economic pressures, the UK budget hotel market remains attractive, and we are extending our network to put us where our customers want to be, while creating hundreds of new jobs."

Emergency service busiest day ever

WEST Midlands Ambulance service battled through its busiest day ever on March 5, receiving an 'unprecedented' number of calls.

Exactly 5,001 emergency calls went through, more than 370 more calls than New Year's Day, typically their busiest day of the year, when they had 4,628.

The previous day was their third busiest day ever with 4,451 emergency calls received.

Trust chief executive, Anthony Marsh, said: "These are unprecedented call numbers; astonishingly, demand was almost 20 per cent higher than we would have expected. It is a huge concern that so many people have seemingly ignored other NHS services and felt the need to dial 999."

Facelift at pub

A PUB is to undergo is undergoing a six-figure refurbishment, creating 10 new jobs in the process. Hussey Arms on Chester Road North closed for extension to be carried out in the dining area and will reopen on March 21.

Scholarships fulfil Stephen's wish

Stephen, who died aged 19

THE mother of inspirational teenager Stephen Sutton has congratulated graduates of a scholarship named in her late son's memory.

Stephen, of Burntwood, was diagnosed with bowel cancer at the age of 15 and was just 19 when he died in May 2014.

His mother Jane joined friends and family at Coventry University to celebrate the graduation of the students, who have all received the scholarship thanks to Stephen.

The group of 14, including four from the USA, were awarded the post graduate certificate in teenage and young adult cancer care. They are the second group to benefit from having their tuition fees paid through the Stephen Sutton Scholarship.

A total of 50 scholarships will be awarded by 2020 to professionals working with young cancer patients.

Among Jane's fundraising activities are completing the London Marathon, which she will take part in again this year, and setting a world Guinness World Skydive Record in 2015. In October she reached the summit of Africa's highest peak Mount Kilimanjaro.

Jane said: "To be invited back to Coventry University, three years on from collecting Stephen's posthumous honorary doctorate in science, and witness the students graduate after benefiting from the 'Stephen Sutton Scholarship' is an honour and a privilege.

"Stephen's wish was for every young person diagnosed with cancer to receive the best possible care and treatment," she added.

"He would be thrilled to know these scholarships are playing such an important role in developing the knowledge of professionals already working with young cancer patients and are therefore instrumental in helping to fulfil his wish."

Ambulances wait times at hospital are up again

THE number of patients being forced to wait in ambulances outside Walsall's hospital has gone up for a third month running.

New figures show that 296 ambulances waited outside the Manor Hospital for longer than half an hour in January, up from 281 in December.

It comes after figures doubled from December to the month before when 130 patients were left waiting.

Councillor Ian Robertson and Walsall Council's health chief said patients waiting around in ambulances is 'unacceptable'.

"The hospital has been struggling a lot with the winter pressures," he said.

"I wasn't aware that the waiting times for ambulances had gone up again. There needs to be an expanded A&E at the hospital – the rebuild of the A&E is on the cards and hopefully that will improve things. It is unacceptable to be waiting around in an ambulance and a lot have to wait before they are even seen. I hope the situation will improve as soon as possible.

"We are faced with cutbacks from central Government and so need to make sure the Walsall pound goes as far as it possibly can."

The figures also reveal there were 37 ambulances delayed outside the hospital for over an hour in January – more than one a day.

This is up from 35 in December and eight in November.

West Midlands Ambulance service, who incurred their busiest day in history last week with more than 5,000 999 calls, admitted that delays do occur at times of peak demand.

Jamie Arrowsmith, spokesman for West Midlands Ambulance Service, said: "West Midlands Ambulance Service continues to work closely with all hospitals in the region to tackle such issues and operates a number of measures to help ensures ambulances are able to offload patients as quickly as possible.

"The Trust's Strategic Operations Cell continuously monitors the level of demand at each hospital so that potential delays can be highlighted early and resolved.

"In addition, the Trust uses Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officers to help minimise delays."

Jon's driven to help NHS workers

Jon Edwards with his trusty Fiat Fullback Pick-Up takes NHS staff to hospital in the snow

ONE man did his bit to help NHS staff during the recent snow storms by driving them to work.

Jon Edwards, aged 43, from Aldridge, was among a number of people who volunteered their time to help get grateful nurses and doctors to New Cross Hospital at Wednesfield and Walsall Manor Hospital.

He drove them through the horrendous weather in his trusty Fiat Fullback pick-up. He said he wanted to help to say thanks to NHS staff who helped to care for his parents when they were ill. He lost his father, Ivor, 72, to cancer in 2015 and then his mother, Carol, 70, to heart problems in 2016.

He said: "I felt like I needed to do this because I owe it to the NHS considering what they have done for me and my family in the past. This is the least I can do."

My mother had a triple bypass and was cared for at New Cross Hospital and my father battled cancer at Walsall Manor Hospital. The staff at both cared for them brilliantly. I could not fault them. Even just driving one person in means it is an extra person because one staff member missing could be critical. The staff I have driven have been very grateful. Really chatty and nice people."

One of his passengers, biomedical scientist Dianne Colebatch, aged 57, said: "I was absolutely petrified to have to go out in the weather.

"My daughter begged me not to and then I saw the post from Jon and took him up on his offer."

NEWS IN BRIEF

£125k of cannabis plants discovered

HUNDREDS of cannabis plants with an estimated street value of £125,000 have been found at an industrial estate building near the M6.

The discovery was made at the Hilton Park site near Essington.

A total of 200 plants were discovered in three rooms. The electricity supply had also been diverted to power the equipment, but the property has since been made safe.

Police raided the building with South Staffordshire Council. No-one was at the address at the time.

Insp Richard Meaden said: "This was an example of fantastic work by officers, taking drugs off our streets."

Jorja nominated for three gongs

MUSIC star Jorja Smith, from Walsall, has been nominated for three titles by a national awards body that recognises up-and-coming acts. The singer is up for Best Songwriter, Best Female Solo Act and Best Record at the UMA Awards, run in partnership with Live Nation.

Jorja has been hugely successful since releasing her debut single Blue Lights in 2016, winning the BRIT's Critics Choice Award. She has also worked with the likes of Drake and Stormzy. The annual televised awards show takes place at Brighton's Main Arena on May 16.

Vital works see patients moved

MORE than 20 patients have been forced to move to other hospitals due to urgent water maintenance.

A total of 27 patients at Bloxwich Hospital had to move to Dorothy Pattison Hospital in Walsall and Bushey Fields Hospital in Dudley.

A spokesperson for Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust said: "As a result of the recent weather conditions there was disruption to the local water supply in Bloxwich, which affected our hospital site.

"During this time we put in place appropriate measures."

Suspect in court over distraction burglaries

A SUSPECTED conman has appeared in court accused of tricking pensioners out of thousands of pounds.

John McDonald. aged 43, has been charged in connection with a series of distraction burglaries in Dudley and Walsall where he allegedly posed as a council worker and gardener to trick his way into homes.

McDonald, of Booth Street, Blakenall, His will next appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on April 3.

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Sporting ethics are not MPs' concerns

AS sporting events go, it is hard to think of anything more dreary than the Tour de France, a spectacle of unsmiling men in synthetic clothing using a slow, outdated form of transport. It's like a three-week episode of the new politically correct Top Gear, without Clarkson's wit.

That said, I can't help but feel sympathy for Sir Bradley Wiggins, who finds his reputation in tatters after a Department for Culture, Media and Sport select committee accused him and his team of "crossing an ethical line."

Now I have no idea whether Wiggins used nefarious means to win the 2012 Tour de France, but since when has it been the role of politicians to adjudicate on sporting conduct? Surely this is a matter for the cycling authorities.

What next? VAR replays being transmitted to Westminster? Parliamentary votes on LBW and penalty decisions? Then again, if somebody wants to make Ken Clarke and John Prescott run the line at the New Den, that's fine with me.

■■■

BESIDES, if politicians want to become embroiled in sport, there are more pressing issues.

Last week a man and his daughter were poisoned with nerve gas in Salisbury, and several innocent civilians, including a seriously ill policeman, are in hospital.

If – and it's still a big if – Russia is behind the attacks, our options are limited. Economic sanctions? Been there, done that. Military action? Out of the question. Send a few diplomats home? Putin would laugh up his sleeve.

One thing that would hurt Putin though, would be if his beloved World Cup was in jeopardy. Now if, as suggested, England dropped out, it might be perceived as an empty gesture. After all, our chances of winning are slim. But imagine if France, Germany, Italy, Holland and Belgium also joined the boycott as a show of European solidarity against tyranny. Yeah, right. They'd rather punish us over Brexit.

■■■

SO sad to hear about the death of Ken Dodd. One of the last of a dwindling breed, he saw his role as making us laugh. No smut, no politics, just good clean fun.

One of my favourite moments as a journalist was sitting with him backstage at Dudley Town Hall, where he fondly reminisced about his days as a young comedian, cutting his teeth at Dudley Hippodrome followed by some heady nights in its Glue Pot bar.

Sir Ken is no longer with us, and the Hippodrome won't be for much longer either. Sad days.

Government: It's everybody's fault but theirs

Donald Trump – European Union warning over threat of imposing tariffs

Max Mosley – morphing into Twister from Beeb's Lark Rise to Candleford?

Monty Don – 'seriously misquoted' over using fewer plastic products in our gardens

It all comes down to blame culture

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

HOW to be a government. 1) Allow the population to grow by 500,000 a year. 2) Blame local councils for not permitting enough houses. 3) Blame developers for not building enough houses. 4) Blame landowners for not releasing land for more houses. 5) Blame everybody but yourselves.

THE European Union warns that if Donald Trump imposes tariffs, Brussels may retaliate with tariffs on Levi jeans, Harley Davidson motorbikes and bourbon whiskey. The price of that mid-life crisis could go through the roof.

FROM the small ads: "Deep fryer for sale, excellent condition, no chips."

I KNEW this had been a long, miserable winter but it was only after putting my old boat on the lake this week that I realised how long. It was the first time I had sailed since October 12. We Brits spend half the year waiting for the other half and hoping it will be better.

I WROTE recently about Donald Trump's joke on "self-deprecating humour." A reader says surely this should be "humor." Not at all. Trump, being an American, said "humor" but I, being British, heard "humour." On my honor.

I AM at the age where blokes worry about prostate cancer. As well they might. Years of watching TV medical dramas has convinced most of us that the Big C follows a pattern. You get the symptoms, go for tests which confirm the GP's hunch, the clever young surgeon cuts out the offending tumour and you live happily ever after (unless the TV ratings are bad, in which case they may bump you off). As a survey this week reveals, prostate cancer is very different.

WITH prostate cancer you may or may not develop symptoms. The only available test for detecting signs of prostate cancer is about as much use as tossing a coin. A follow-up biopsy may leave you impotent, incontinent or both. The cancer may kill you quickly or do nothing, and you die of old age. A serious prostate cancer can look benign and a benign cancer can appear serious. And sometimes surgery can release cancerous cells into the rest of your body. We need a better diagnostic process. So is there no hope? Actually, there is. This latest study followed 400,000 middle-aged men for a decade. And while routine PSA screening for prostate cancer appeared to save no lives, only three men in every 1,000 died of prostate cancer during the 10 years. Those are not bad odds. While there's no room for complacency about prostate cancer, the one thing this survey proves conclusively is that there's a lot of other stuff you can die of.

I SUSPECT Monty Don, the TV gardener, has been seriously misquoted. He wants us to use fewer plastic products in our gardens. This has been translated as a call to "get rid of" plastic tubs, pots, dibbers and so on. But it's getting rid of plastic that has caused the environmental nightmare in the first place. Don't bin it. Keep the plastic you've got but don't buy any more.

INCIDENTALLY, I am down to my last 18 plastic straws from a box, purchased some years ago, which contained 225 and carries the message from Sainsbury's "We care about our quality and what you think." I wonder what they think I should do with my last 18 straws.

ACCORDING to my local council's latest report, "sport" is the second biggest item of its expenditure. It spends more on maintaining tennis courts and providing pitches where talentless amateur footballers can scream obscenities at each other on Sunday mornings than it does on public safety, street cleaning, theatres and museums, and I dare say it's not alone. This country spends billions every year subsidising the entrenched and unchallenged notion that sport is A Good Thing which produces a fit and healthy nation that aims to win but is noble in defeat. Where, oh where, is the evidence?

IT was entirely right and proper that Members of Parliament, in the form of the The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport select committee, should be the ones to dish the dirt this week on drug taking among British cyclists. After all, it's obvious that MPs never take anything to improve their performance.

THE strain may be taking its toll on Max Mosley. Does anyone else think he's morphing into Twister (Karl Johnson) from the Beeb's Victorian drama, Lark Rise to Candleford?

TALKING POINT

Sometimes people are thankful for a moan

MY esteemed colleague last week wrote about the importance of saying thank you and I wholeheartedly agree with him on this. However, there are some occasions where I would be more tempted to say no thank you.

Unlike him I am not referring to the common courtesy thank yous when you hold the door open for someone, give them your seat on the train etc. They are always a must. I refer to service that you are less than happy with. Yes in any line of work it is lovely when you receive a phone call or letter expressing gratitude for what you have done but what if the opposite is the case?

I must admit I do have a reputation for complaining about things. Sometimes when we are out for a meal with friends I think they cringe. But if I ask for my steak medium rare that is how I want it, not done to a crisp. You are paying for the food and it should be what you ordered. Or if the food is not hot enough I send it back. I would not expect to eat it like that at home and certainly not when I am paying somebody else to provide it.

And actually the establishment should be grateful for my feedback as maybe the next time they will make sure they get it right for the customer.

It's the same with things bought in shops or online. If that product does not do what you think it should or does not look like it does on the internet site why shouldn't you take/send it back and complain? How will these businesses learn if they never have your opinion – good or bad.

And this can actually lead to a very positive experience for both sides. I recently had a problem – a scratch – with some furniture I ordered. Admittedly it was a small one which I could have covered up if necessary but I went on the online chat line and explained the situation and at no stage did they belittle my comment.

In fact they were grateful for the feedback and sorted out my complaint, turning a bad experience into a good one.

It meant that I would both use the service again and recommend it to friends. Word of mouth is so important for businesses. That is why so many send out feedback forms. You are positively encouraged to give your verdict – good or bad.

So don't be afraid to speak out. As long as it is constructive criticism or a genuine complaint it should be dealt with and hopefully then resolved.

To say thanks is great but there is nothing wrong with saying NO THANKS.

SUE ATTWATER

Still waiting for response over dementia care

WE hear what Eddie Hughes MP has to say in the newspaper, but what about what we have to say?

I sent three letters to Eddie Hughes in August and September 2017, sad to say, I got no reply. The letters were about people with dementia and carers and people looking after them, also about people having to go into care homes.

Remember they have worked all their lives, and some have been in the Forces. So many in the war never returned, dying for their country.

When people get old and have to go into care homes they have lost almost everything. When David Cameron was Prime Minister in 2015, he said that he wanted to make Britain the best country in the world for people with dementia and carers.

Our Prime Minister Mrs May said in 2017 that she and the Government were going to make it better for people going into care homes, that they would not have to pay in full, but putting the allowance up. It is now 2018, and we're still waiting. As for Eddie Hughes, I want him to understand, not all people are on the internet. Not all people can get out, and the only way to communicate is to send letters to the House of Commons, but it's no good if we get no reply – it's a waste of time.

Like I said in my letters, why we voted Conservative was because we wanted a government that would keep its word. Also, we want a prime minister and all the Government to understand that with dementia and carers, it's very hard; we all want to remember, we do not know what is coming in our lives, only God knows that.

S PARTRIDGE
Bloxwich

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Walsall Chronicle,
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EMAIL
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Real lack of planning for library

IT never fails to amaze me the lack of planning that goes into work by local authorities, and I refer in particular to the refurbishment of Walsall Library.

You have recently reported that at least a further £250,000 will be required due to roof tiles needing to be made, and insulation fitted. This refurbishment has been talked about for months, and the library has even been closed and moved to an adjoining building.

You would assume that at some stage in the early planning process a suitable surveyor would be employed to give a thorough report on the condition of the building and what needed to be done.

This surely should include the roof which is not exactly a hidden item. Also bearing in mind that it is a listed building the surveyor should have been aware initially that there is a problem in replacing certain items. Let's hope the work is worthwhile and is completed on time without further expense.

ROGER SMITH
Walsall

Churchill would have backed united Europe

IN response to R.Teecey's letter of March 3. He tells me to go and see The Darkest Hour. No thank you R. Teecey, if Brexit goes through I will be able to experience it in real life. I presume R. Teecey is suggesting that Winston would not agree with the EU.

First of all I have about 10 books on Churchill and several DVDs. I used to live about two miles from Chartwell and have been there many times.

This is what Churchill had to say about Europe at Zurich in 1946: "We must build a kind of United States of Europe...The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important."

France, Poland and others have got over the wars and here only desperate Brexiteers hold on to them.

ROGER WATTS
Walsall

Corbyn's against a free Press

SHOULD Corbyn, heaven forbid, become Prime Minister, then all media outlets that do not show support for him and the Labour Party 'will be dealt with', is his latest outburst.

This is surely a direct threat to the 'freedom of the Press'.

At the moment, he has two strong outlets for everything he says about his policies, The Guardian newspaper and the BBC.

They have both completely ignored the recent highly-publicised revelations about his meeting with a self-confessed Czechoslovakian communist agent during the Cold War.

But there was not one line of print or mention of this fact which other media outlets have supported.

Corbyn and McDonnell have shown the path Labour should follow leading to a communist ideology suppressing any opposition.

A future political party, CommLab?

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Youngsters' can-ny canine collection

HUNDREDS of cans of food were collected by a school to donate to a dog's rescue. Joseph Leckie Academy in Walsall teamed up with Monty's Rescue and collected 430 cans of dog food in two to three weeks to ensure vulnerable dogs are well fed.

Kind-hearted students even battled to collect the most and Raza Ejaz, 15, succeeded after collecting 76 by himself and he took up an offer to have a placement with the rescue team as a reward.

Alison Devey, head of Year 11, said: "We set up a challenge between the form groups and the children to see who could collect the most, it was a lot of fun and great to get the students involved in charity work."

The charity, based in Stoke-on-Trent, rescues, rehabilitates and retrains the dogs in order to re-home them. They specifically helps to care for the breed Dogue de Bordeaux but also cares for others.

Volunteer for Monty's Rescue Rebecca Evill said: "The response these students gave for Monty's Rescue is amazing. We cannot thank the students enough for their commitment to making this a success."

Steve Jones, Scott Battison and Bel Lawton with Raza Ejaz, aged 16

School needs to do more

A SCHOOL in Walsall still needs to improve despite dragging itself out of special measures, the education watchdog has said.

Leamore Primary School in Bloxwich Road, has maintained its 'requires improvement' status despite looking hopeful that it would improve after being taken out of special measures in 2016.

Ofsted carried out an inspection at the school with 241 pupils in June 2016 and decided they were taking 'effective action' towards improving but they have maintained their status due to 'staffing instability'.

Inspector Nadeem Bhatti wrote in the report: "Since the last inspection, senior leaders have not secured consistently good teaching throughout the school. As a result, outcomes over time have not been good.

"In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, pupils did not make as much progress as other pupils nationally, particularly the most able pupils, boys and disadvantaged pupils.

"Attendance is below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities."

But the report continued to say they have identified where to improve but have struggled to do so in the last couple of years because of a change in staff.

It said: "Leaders and governors have correctly identified priorities for improvement and are committed to raising standards across the school."

Michelle Hill, the headteacher at Leamore Primary School, said: "We welcome the positive comments made within the report. We are clear about the next steps on our school improvement journey."

Councillor Aftab Nawaz Cabinet Member for Children's Services at Walsall Council stated: "The Council is working in partnership with Leamore Primary to address the issues highlighted in the Ofsted report and in raising standards across the school.

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Graeme on his marks for biggest challenge

MAKING a debut with the Royal Shakespeare Company – appearing in two separate plays – is challenging enough for anyone.

But Black Country actor Graeme Brookes isn't only working long hours on the boards in Stratford upon Avon. He is also in training for his first London Marathon.

And he is busy writing two popular blogs about both. Graeme, who is from Walsall, is appearing in both The Duchess of Malfi and The Fantastic Follies of Mrs Rich at the Swan Theatre. He said: "Performing at Stratford with the RSC is all I have ever wanted to do since a school trip whilst at Wood Green High School when I was 17 to see The Merchant of Venice. It's taken me 13 years to get here."

Graeme's in The Fantastic Follies of Mrs Rich rehearsals at The Swan

Physical

Meanwhile he is running the marathon in aid of The National Deaf Children's Society, both of his paternal grandparents were deaf. Graeme has never run a marathon and says he does not even like running but he has taken on the challenge, losing more than eight stone in recent months.

But the day job is taking its toll. In his latest 'rungraemerun' blog he says: "Since the middle of February I have been working 50+ hour weeks and the last fortnight have been 60 & 70+ hour weeks.

"On top of that, the production of Malfi is leading to me having to warm up numerous times a day as its quite intensely physical (but only for a brief few minutes), so the last thing on my mind is going for a jog.

"I have now moved up to Stratford upon Avon, which is much better to run around than Clapham & Southbank (I think). I managed some morning runs – about 7.5 milers, not exactly amazing but I don't have much option as I have no other time to go and I just can't get up at 6am to jog 10/12 milers."

He was due to run the Warwick Half Marathon on March 4 but it was cancelled by the 'Beast from the East'. He is due to take part in the Coventry and Brimingham half marathons before the London event. Graeme reveals that he enjoys running along the river in Stratford, despite the swans. He explains: "The swans around Stratford are beasts! Spitting all over the place as I jog past them, I imagine it being like a Sex Pistols gig back in '75."

Despite the ambitious challenges he has set himself, Graeme is confident of success. He writes: "I am feeling mentally strong which is good so I still know for a fact that I will be finishing the London Marathon. No doubt. If I have to army crawl, I will finish." In his RSC blog he tells how the casts began rehearsals in London in December before moving to Stratford ahead of the opening night of The Duchess of Malfi which was on March 1. The Fantastic Follies of Mrs Rich opens on March 23.

He is currently rehearsing all day for the second production while performing each day in the first.

The Duchess of Malfi, which runs until August. he describes as a 'beautiful play. Very dark, epic, emotive and aggressive'. While Mrs Rich is 'full of comedy and colour with some hilarious characters, crazy plot twists, mischief, songs and animals!' He writes: "Imagine bouncing between those rehearsal rooms. It makes you dizzy because they're so diametrically opposed. It's how I imagine Dorothy felt going from black and white in Kansas to colour in Oz."

And his other interests seem to be having an impact on the rest of the cast. He says: "We all get along and plans are being made amongst both casts for writing clubs, reading clubs, poker nights and football games. A number of us are even contemplating entering the Shakespeare half marathon in May!"

Anyone who would like to support Graeme should go to: http://m.virgin moneygiving.com/mt/uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-web/fundraiser/showFundraiserPage.action?userUrl=GraemeBrookes&faId=890095&isTeam=false

Visit his blogs at www.rsc.org.uk/blogs/whispers-from-the-wings/death-and-comedy and https://rungraemerun.com/

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Electric dreams may be hard to realise on roads

AS a retired engineer, I am dismayed but not surprised by the lack of thought gone into plans to deal with pollution.

Have the Government and councils considered the consequences?

They have only taken into account town traffic which is only about 25 per cent, but ignored 75 per cent.

Pollution from shipping is horrific, trains and other old public transport. military vehicles, aircraft, etc are bad because of their age.

Obviously, there is also domestic, commercial and industrial pollution.

Their only answer to the problem is backing electric vehicles, which I am not against. However they have ignored or not thought about the problems these will bring.

Chronicle reader Brian Tomlinson, who has a background in engineering, has put forward his thoughts on the future of transport, in particular, tackling the problems of pollution.

Are we going in the right direction, or will electric vehicles be too much trouble?

Diversity

For a start, it will cost billions of pounds to set up the infrastructure. It will probably take 10 years to achieve this, if the money is available. Also, millions of charging points will be required and extra power stations needed for the charging load.

Houses have a 100 amp electrical supply – will the house have enough diversity to power the house and charge cars at the same time?

An average electric car does 175 miles on a good day, probably equating to three hours running time. So what about problems occuring on the motorway, when there might be a long delay, with traffic building up at 750 vehicles per mile?

Electric vehicles are heavier, hence there will be more deadly brake and tyre dust caused as a result, and roads will wear out quicker. Then there is the question of their engines being silent – so this brings dangers to the blind, deaf, hard of hearing, cyclists and pedestrians. And, where is all the copper for the electric motors going to come from?

There is no recycling set-up for electric motors and batteries.

How do multi-vehicle families charge their cars?

Probably only half the houses in the UK have front gardens to park and charge their cars, therefore, trip hazards are likely on footpaths.

Finally householders will incur larger electric bills, the cost of replacement batteries is high, along with the initial cost of electric cars.

There is no simple answer to the pollution problem, but a lot more thought is required. It needs to be done in stages.

The following areas need to be reviewed:

We should look at many power sources ie hybrid, hydrogen, biodiesel etc, and making cars smaller and lighter.

Engines should be limited to 2000cc for cars and 3000cc for vans. Brake and tyre dust should be collected within the vehicle and all engines should be tuned for economy, not performance.

Better engines and exhaust filters should be fitted along with 'donkey engines' for charging electric batteries.

There should be more emphasis on freight by rail, canal, river and sea, with an improvement on comfort and frequency of public transport.

Hopefully over the coming years, better batteries will be developed making the electric vehicle more user-friendly.

Obviously old diesel and oil burning petrol-engined vehicles will have to be scrapped. We do need all types of cleaner vehicles, trains, ships etc with reduced emissions.

We certainly do not want another 'Beeching Report' which has led to today's problems and the resultant pollution.

The Government has already caused a rise in carbon dioxide by pushing for more petrol engine sales.

The average petrol engine emits 20 per cent more CO_2 than a diesel.

Hence, they have partly solved one problem, but created another. Better luck next time, perhaps!

B V Tomlinson
M.I.E.T. (Member of the Institution of Engineering and Technology)

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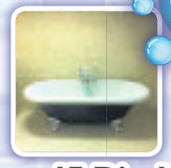

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Lovebirds Brooks renew their vows 60 years on

IT was love at first sight for a Black Country couple who have renewed their vows as a testament of their love.

Ronald and Olive Brooks, aged 84 and 79 respectively, reached their 60th wedding anniversary on March 1, and not even the Beast from the East was going to stop their celebrations.

The surprise dinner organised by their family was simply postponed until a few days later and they still renewed their vows while he bought her a diamond ring for the diamond occasion.

The pair from Wednesbury met a day after her 16th birthday on April 21, 1954 and were engaged when she was 17, then married when she was 19 and she only had one complaint.

She said: "He had come back from being in Egypt with the forces and I said to him he should have come back yesterday, we could have celebrated my birthday.

"It was definitely love at first sight. Being 16, he is my first and last love and now we live happily ever after. The secret is to not lie to one another and to share. These days people do not share. What is theirs is theirs but any thing to us is ours, not yours or mine.

"When we reached our 40th anniversary we had out rings blessed and we said if we ever reached our 60th anniversary we would renew our vows.

"I want to thank all my family for that they did. It was absolutely brilliant, a complete surprise."

They both worked at the furniture factory Kingfishers Ltd in Charles Street, West Bromwich before it closed in 1977 then Mrs Brooks stayed at home to take care of the children while Mr Brooks went on to make artificial limbs for New Cross Hospital. He retired when he was 66-years-old.

They had two daughters, Karen Peters, aged 56, and Lynda Smith, aged 52. Now they have four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

They both enjoy going to the theatre and have a love for flowers.

Ronald and Olive Brookes celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary

Ronald and Olive share a joke during their wedding on March 1, 1958

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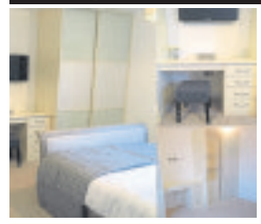
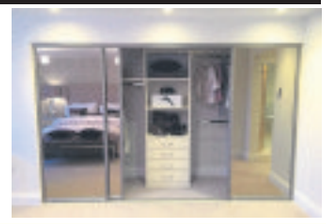

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Mosque supports homeless in Walsall

A MOSQUE in Walsall is supporting the homeless to cope with the big freeze.

Members of the Aisha Mosque in Rutter Street have been donating winter kits to those living on the streets in the town.

The kind-hearted gesture is part of an initiative called iCare, which aims to raise emergency funds to distribute cold survival kits to provide respite for the homeless sleeping rough over the winter.

Aisha Mosque has collected over £750 as part of a wider appeal across the country, which has raised more than £10,000 to date.

Tanveer Akmal, president of Aisha Mosque said: "Aisha Mosque works very closely with all key service providers in Walsall as we are very much part of the wider community we live in.

Beneficial

"I want to thank the congregation who have always supported our appeals. I believe that these winter survival kits will provide comfort and will be extremely beneficial to those that receive them.

"I want to thank iCare for choosing Walsall as a distribution point. We are delighted to be working with Walsall Council to reach out to make a small difference to our homeless people in Walsall."

So far, the project has distributed 300 winter survival kits across the UK, with 24 packs given to Walsall Council for distribution through their Homeless Shelter scheme.

With distribution of kits to take place nationwide, keep up-to-date with iCare on their website www.icare.uk.com.

Ukim Relief (part of iCare Relief) hand over winter kits for the homeless

Right royal search for roles

A search for royalty is on as organisers prepare for a village carnival.

The Pelsall Carnival royalty competition will take place on Sunday, April 22 at Pelsall Community Centre, Station Road.

A competition for the Carnival Queen, for girls aged 15 to 25 that live in the Walsall area, will be held at 1.15pm.

The competitions for the Carnival Princess, for girls aged 11 to 14 who live in Pelsall; Carnival Rosebud, for girls aged six to 10 in Pelsall, and Carnival Page Boy, for boys aged six to 10 in Pelsall, will be held at 3pm.

To enter, call 01922 684695.

Last year the carnival raised an impressive £3350 which was donated to 23 charities and groups including West Midland Air Ambulance, Acorns Children's Hospice and St Giles Hospice.

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David Tildersley seen in his uniform

Tributes to war hero on death at the age of 101

A WAR hero who was awarded the Military Cross has died at the age of 101. David Tildesley went on to run a family forging business in Willenhall.

His daughter Tilly Richardson paid tribute to her father, who rose to the rank of colonel and was a keen skier and rower. She said he was believed to be the last surviving person with a Second World War Military Cross and bar.

Mr Tildesley, a keen golfer

Mr Tildesley was a ski instructor during his time in the military, and only hung up his ski boots, age 89. He also sailed competitively until the age of 92, but carried on playing golf until he was 98.

Born in January 1917 in Wolverhampton, he attended Jesus College in Cambridge where he read law and rowed for his college. In 1939 he signed up for National Service the day after war against Germany was declared, and married his fiancée whom he met at Cambridge. He served in the Royal Regiment of Artillery, first in North Africa, and then in Italy.

As a captain, he was awarded the Military Cross in September 1943 as a Forward Observation Officer for B Company, 6 Bn. Lincolnshire Regiment for the first five days of the battle of Salerno bridgehead.

In 1939 he was awarded Bar to the Military Cross in January 1944 – the only one in the division to achieve this – for the Battle of Suja Valley. At the end of the war Mr Tildesley was sent to Schmeltz to the newly-formed British Army 46th Division ski training school due to the perceived threat from Russian ski troops over the mountains. He quickly became chief instructor.

Back home he joined his father to run the family business of W. H. Tildesley Drop Forgings, which was formed in 1875, and is still in operation in Bow Street, Willenhall. He also joined the Territorial Army and formed his own 643 L.A.A. regimental band, which won the county band competition. He was a member of the ski club of Great Britain for many years, was Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Stafford, and Master of the Shropshire Beagles.

Mr Tildesley is survived by four of his six children. His funeral is on March 21 and details can be found via Jennings Funeral Directors on 01902 267496.

His daughter Tilly said: "It goes without saying he was extraordinarily courageous but he was very modest about his achievements."

Hundreds join MP in bus service fight

A PETITION launched by defence secretary Gavin Williamson against the withdrawal of Sunday bus services has been backed by more than 250 people.

Following Staffordshire County Council's decision to remove funding for several bus routes, Arriva took the 'commercial' decision to remove services on Sundays.

The MP for South Staffordshire says a number of residents have been in touch with him to highlight their concerns. Among the services which will no longer operate on a Sunday include the 2E Cannock to Walsall.

The 16 Essington to Walsall will also no longer operate on a Tuesday and Friday excluding Bank Holidays.

So far, it has received more than 250 signatures.

For more information go to www.change.org/p/staffordshire-county-council-restore-vital-bus-services-across-south-staffordshire

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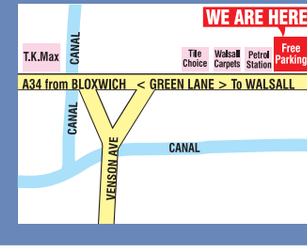

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No place in schools for my children, says mother

A MOTHER says she has struggled to get her children enrolled at a local school after moving back to the area.

Nadia Welsh, aged 39 from Walsall, has been told there are no spaces available for two of her school-age children, including her oldest who is autistic, while two have finally been enrolled after two-and-half months of being out of education.

Mrs Welsh has been teaching her two-year-old George, 11-year-old Zara and 14-year-old Ammir from home during a four-month wait for spaces to become available.

The family lived in Walsall for 17 years before moving to Wales for Mrs Welsh's job – but they moved back in November. Mrs Welsh says she needs the older two to be in the same school because Ammir was bullied at his previous school over his learning difficulties.

She said: "They have not been in school for four months and they tell me I am on a waiting list but how long until they sort it out?

"They have offered a school 10 miles away but it is just too far because he got bullied at his previous school and I need him to stay in the same school as his sister in case something happens. If children are taken out of school for one or two weeks they get fined but my children have been out for months and no-one has even checked on them."

Councillor Aftab Nawaz, portfolio holder for Children's Services and Education, said: "The family were advised on the mid-year admission application procedure but unfortunately the schools they made a preference for were both full in the year groups. There is an appeals process."

Nadia Welsh, of Walsall, with two of her children, Zara and George

College top for apprentices

A COLLEGE has been rewarded for its apprenticeship provision.

Walsall College was named the regional Apprenticeship Provider of the Year at the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference (AAC) Awards and will head to the national finals next Thursday in Birmingham.

The college was recognised at a glittering reception at the House of Commons on March 5 – the start of National Apprenticeship Week. James Norris, assistant principal for commercial development at Walsall College, said: "It's an honour to be the regional winner of the Apprenticeship Provider of the Year award.

"As one of the largest providers of 16-to-18-year-old apprenticeship training in the West Midlands, our apprenticeship provision is something we are very proud of."

50,000-seat stadium vision for Wolves is revealed by Shi in vow to stay at Molinuex

WOLVES chairman Jeff Shi has revealed his dream for a 50,000 capacity stadium – and confirmed the club plans to stay at Molineux.

A stadium redevelopment has been on hold since 2012 when Wolves were relegated from the Premier League.

Ambitious owners Fosun are planning to expand Molineux if and when the team is established in the top flight. And Shi, speaking exclusively to the Chronicle's sister paper, the Express & Star, has a dream for a 50,000 all-seater stadium befitting the team Wolves are looking to build.

"Let's try to get to 50,000 as soon as possible," Shi said. "Everyone wants to have a big stadium. It's a step-by-step process and only when we build a strong team and can compete comfortably in the Premier League is the time to expand the stadium. Eventually, if we can achieve that, we'll do it of course." He said managing director Laurie Dalrymple had said the maximum capacity would be 50,000.

"I even asked him can we have a bigger one like Real Madrid's," he said. "But it's hard because the position of the stadium, the university is behind us.

Expansion will be step by step."

There have been suggestions that Wolves are looking elsewhere for a new stadium site but Shi said: "The plan is to stay at Molineux. Although maybe one day in the future we'll be too big."

Previous owner Steve Morgan invested £50 million in the club's state-of-the-art Compton Park training facilities.

With Fosun looking to grow the club at a rapid rate, Shi said that Compton too would need expanding – starting next year – with the size of the buildings and the quality of pitches being looked at.

"Compton is too small now, we should try to find more land and pitches," he added. "We will do something in Compton Park next year and try to make it more efficient to meet the requirements of the teams here.

"There are discussions taking place with the council and schools. We're confident we can make the Compton bigger and better.

"We have made quick growth and everything has to keep pace with that, including Compton."

Step up and volunteer to help walking festival

MARSHALLS and other volunteers are needed to help with a festival which is being organised by a popular rambling group.

Taking place this summer, the Walsall Walking Festival will be held at Walsall Arboretum in Lichfield Street.

The free event will kick off on June 3 and is being organised by the Walsall branch of the Ramblers Group.

It will consist of up to eight walks radiating out from the Arboretum. A number of the routes will be dedicated sponsored walks with the aim of raising money for local charities. The group now needs marshals, people to man the registration, promotion and refreshment tents and put out and collect route markers.

To help call Steve on 01922 636627. For more information on the event, log onto http://www.walsallwalkingfestival.co.uk/

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Calls for action to bring Rising Sun back to life

CALLS have been made to restore a landmark pub, which has been targeted by arsonists and vandals, 10 years after it closed.

The Rising Sun, on the A5 Chester Road in Brownhills, was boarded up in 2008 – and its doors have not reopened since.

In October it was was hit by a 'severe' blaze, which ripped through the building and destroyed its roof.

Arsonists also targeted the pub in 2011, narrowly avoiding destroying it completely after breaking in through the roof. And metal thieves have repeatedly targeted the building – leaving a £2,500 trail of damage in April last year. Before its closure,

The former landmark pub, The Rising Sun, in its current dilapidated state

Damage

The Rising Sun was one of the longest-established pubs in the West Midlands and it is believed there has been a pub at the site since 1769.

The building was owned by Marston's and was sold in 2009 to Eastern Leisure Ltd but a mooted makeover failed to materialise.

Councillor Ken Ferguson, who represents the Brownhills ward, would like to see the pub brought back into use. He said: "It's the first thing people see when travelling from Cannock – that's the landmark for Walsall. The pub used to be quite a popular pub, restaurant and hotel. It is a shame it's got into the state that the pub is in.

"If it can be brought back into commercial use that's viable that would be the best option.

"It is an area that could be developed but it isn't the best site for the development of housing because of the nature of the highways nearby. It would be better if it was kept as a commercial property. There are various restaurants and pubs that make a living still from that sort of thing."

It is not known who currently owns the building.

Councillor Ferguson added: "I would have thought there's a possibility of it sustaining a life with it being on the main A5 Chester Road.

"The building has been hit by arsonists but if there's an empty building it's going to attract that sort of person.

"They will start hanging around by it and it escalates into what kind of fun they seek from it. One of the people might happen to be an arsonist and it goes from there.

"It was rumoured that there was some planning application being sorted for it but I checked with planning and there was nothing as of last month."

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MP 'deriding staff', says police chief Jamieson

A WALSALL MP has been accused of 'deriding' the work of specialist police officers by branding them 'back office staff'.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) David Jamieson has hit back at Tory MP Eddie Hughes, who has called for more bobbies on the beat.

Mr Hughes said it was 'crazy' that 78 frontline WMP officers were being axed over the next 12 months, while £10 million was being spent on 'office staff'. But Labour PCC Mr Jamieson hailed the work of the force's 3,000 staff, describing their roles as 'extremely valuable'.

He has invited the Walsall North MP to 'come and see the back office he has criticised so publicly', including meeting child abuse investigators, 999 call handlers and forensics experts.

Mr Jamieson said: "The 3,000 staff working for West Midlands Police, who carry out extremely valuable roles keeping us safe will be incensed with these Eddie Hughes comments. I'm shocked that Eddie wants more officers to be stuck behind desks."

The PCC says WMP has lost £145m in Government funding since 2010. He is raising council tax by £12-a-year and has announced the closures of 24 police bases in a bid to help funding.

Mr Hughes raised the issue of officer numbers in Prime Minister's Questions last month. He called on Theresa May to urge Mr Jamieson to put more officers on the streets.He said: "He should be engaging with his staff rather than sending me letters.

"His staff seem to be raising concerns with me about how the police and crime commissioner is going to be handling the deployment of officers."

Memorial inspires book

Historian Terry Evans with his new book Some of Cradley's finest World War II

A LOCAL historian has had a book published about armed forces personnel who fought in the Second World War. Author Terry Evans has focused on the impact of the war on people hailing from Cradley.

It comes just over four years after a book by Mr Evans about Cradley's finest during the First World War. 'Some of Cradley's Finest – World War Two' tells the tales of people connected to the area who lost their lives in the conflict, as well as those who survived.

The book has been published by Midland Film And Art, which is based in Cradley, and will be distributed by the Cradley Then and Now history group.

Retired metallurgist Mr Evans, 73, said: "Originally the idea came when I was looking at the Cradley war memorial.

"I was just looking at the names on there and then I started to research it.

He explained: "It is the stories of men with Cradley connections who fought in the war – some named on the war memorial and some not. I think everybody who served needs to be mentioned."

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Light at the end of tunnel for rail hope

No strings for Mary's visit

THE puppeteer behind Lady Penelope in Thunderbirds will be at an art gallery this month where the puppet is on show.

Mary Turner, who operated Lady Penelope, is appearing as part of Wolverhampton Art Gallery's exhibition TV Puppets: Icons From 80 Years of Entertainment on Saturday, March 24, at 2pm, when she will talk about her life and career.

Mary started in 1958 on Torchy The Battery Boy for AP films where she went on to work on nine of Gerry Anderson's iconic shows, including Stingray, Thunderbirds and Captain Scarlet, as well as her own series such as Rupert the Bear.

As supervising puppeteer, she was at the forefront of developing the technology in the puppets as well as bringing them to life.

Mary was also responsible for sculpting what were to become many of our most enduring and iconic TV puppet characters, including Steve Zodiak, Marina, Troy Tempest, Captain Scarlet and, of course, Lady

Mary Turner with Lady Penelope from the Thunderbirds puppet series

'I'M not here on a whim – I'm here because I genuinely believe we have got to do this'

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling wants to give the Black Country's transport system lift-off with his backing for three major schemes.

In a whistlestop tour of the region, Mr Grayling first arrived at the future site of Willenhall Railway Station, to be built as part of the reopening of passengers services between Wolverhampton and Walsall.

He then made the four-mile journey to Midland Metro's Wednesbury depot where he drove a new battery-powered tram, which will operate without overhead lines in Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

On to Brierley Hill town centre where he inspected the site of a planned terminus for trams on the planned Wednesbury to Dudley Midland Metro extension.

Mr Grayling said: "I'm very committed to making sure we reopen some of the old freight routes in the West Midlands area. I think there is an opportunity to create better public transport by bringing back lines which were lost to passenger services a generation ago."

He was joined at the site by West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, Walsall North MP Eddie Hughes and Walsall Council leader Sean Coughlan.

But money is available and has been earmarked, according to Mr Street. He said the case was being put together with designs being drawn up for the two stations on the route, Willenhall and James Bridge in Darlaston, and a timetable was being discussed.

He said the stations would be 'efficient and practical' with a platform, shelters, parking and passenger information.

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They're still just like nothing on Earth

Punk icons The Stranglers are back on the road following the sell-out success of last year's Black and White Tour. They are taking their Classic Collection around the UK, to coincide with the planned re-release of the entire Stranglers studio album catalogue from 1977-82.

Fans can look forward to a slew of greatest hits when the band headline Birmingham's O2 Academy on Saturday, March 17. It's a show that The Stranglers are also looking forward to.

Bassist Jean-Jacques Burnel says: "We've had some amazing times in the Black Country and Birmingham and around and about. We always have a great time when we're on the road and it's always sold out when we play in Brum. Our drummer, Jim, lives in that neck of the woods.

"We've got a very loyal audience but there's also a sense of renewal of the audience. People who've grown up with us and remember times past are still there.

"They remember the problems of us being a young punk band. It seems to be that for some reason a lot of teenagers are also starting to check us out over the past 10 years. You know, with the last three albums, people have really picked up on us again.

"Also, all the bad press that we had all those years ago seems to be a badge of honour because everything is so cynical and phoney these days. All the bad times are now a badge of honour. It's funny. We were the threat to western civilisation and morality and now we're seen as a healthy thing because the music scene is all so sterile."

Drawing from an expansive and impressive catalogue that spans some 40 years, The Stranglers will enthral audiences with an exciting mix of material, all bearing the distinctive signature style of this most enduring of British bands; driving rhythms, anthemic melodies, quirky time signatures and occasional dark humour, held together by those trademark rumbling bass lines and swirling keyboards.

No more heroes – The Stranglers are heading to Birmingham

WAVE

The Stranglers are riding high on the crest of a resurgent wave of popularity. They continue to out-rock many on the live circuit, including much younger bands, and their existing large and loyal fan base has swelled in recent years as new converts join the ranks.

With record-breaking, sell-out shows and festival appearances throughout the UK and the rest of the world, public demand to hear and see the group has never been so high; true testament to their considerable musical talent and the enduring quality of their songs.

JJ says it's been a struggle and they're thrilled to be winning the war.

"Well, we've been used to wars from day one. We didn't have a ready-made audience in the very early days. Even when we were playing pubs we were having confrontations with the landlord calling the police to pull the plug.

"In the very early days, people were also getting offended by what we were playing. We had people try to get on stage and whack us. We had, once, an agent who booked us for one show. They booked us for a Young Conservatives night in Purley, in South London.

"We were dressed in rags and tatters and there were all these people in smoking jackets and suits and bow ties. It was evidently obvious that we weren't going to get on with each other.

"Jet went on stage and said you're not going to like us and there was a bit of language. So one guy came up on stage with a bow tie but we kicked him off stage and 400 people left the hall, leaving five who thought we were brilliant. I think we did play for the five to get our fee."

JJ is pleased that the band's recorded output from an imperious late 1970s and early 1980s is being re-aired.

"It was a very intense and fast period from having overnight been the pariahs and then breaking all kinds of records and selling records and having an audience who wanted to see us rather than murder us. It was very creative for us back then. We were just writing all the time.

"There was pent up frustration and energy and we wanted to explore our potential. We weren't satisfied. Suddenly we had a bit of a hit, we wanted to go further. We wanted to see what we could as artists, what we could do. As our experiences expanded and our horizon, so did our attempts to try and improve.

> *The bad press that we had all those years ago is a badge of honour*

"In the first 18 months we had three albums out, all top three. The first three years were really slow and doubts crept into our mind about doing the right thing. Then things happened suddenly but overnight it changed. We were living off Paxo sage and onion stuffing when no girlfriend meant no food or drink."

Remarkably, the band are more popular than ever. And they have offers to tour the world. The band pick and choose what they want to do – turning down things that are too much bother.

"We have to decide whether we want to go somewhere. Every time we turn down the USA they double the offer. There are a few places we're not too keen on going to. The Americans want you to queue up for the American embassy and be interrogated about why we want to go there. You can't make a joke. So we don't accept the offers."

Andy Richardson

● **For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.**

Edgelarks Photo: Elly Lucas

Life on the Edge with one of the UK's top folk duos

One of Britain's leading folk music duos are performing at a village church on the edge of the Black Country this weekend.

Edgelarks, who are Phillip Henry and Hannah Martin, have just received their third nomination in the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. They won the top duo award in 2014 and were nominated again in 2016.

The pair's new project takes the roots of their previous work – from the traditional musics of the British Isles to Indian classical slide guitar and Phillip's stomping beatbox harmonica – and adds a strong stem of original writing.

Edgelarks, which was one of MOJO's top ten folk albums of 2017, is Phillip and Hannah's most innovative work to date. As well as being their fourth studio album, it also marks the genesis of a brand new band name.

From recording their first album, Singing the Bones, at home in their living room in the dead of night, they have gone on to produce three more records – Mynd, Live in Calstock and Watershed – each time refining the process and honing their production skills.

Edgelarks appropriately will be performing near Kinver Edge, at St Peter's Church in Kinver, on Saturday at 8pm. Tickets cost £13. See www.edgelarks.co.uk or call 07503 191825 for details.

But fans of Irish folk will no doubt be at Birmingham Town Hall that night for The Dublin Legends – Sean Cannon, Eamonn Campbell, Paul Watchorn and Gerry O'Connor – playing favourites by The Dubliners.

Crying for Evita as blockbuster returns

Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's Evita is thrilling audiences once again across the UK.

Telling the story of Eva Peron, wife of former Argentine dictator Juan Peron, Evita follows Eva's journey from humble beginnings through to extraordinary wealth, power and iconic status.

Madalena Alberto returns to the role of Eva, for which she received critical acclaim in the 2014 West End revival. Her other credits include the role of Fantine in the 25th anniversary production of Les Misérables.

Evita is one of the most popular musicals including the songs Don't Cry For Me Argentina, On This Night of a Thousand Stars, You Must Love Me and Another Suitcase in Another Hall.

Other theatre highlights to look out for include comic alternative history from Told By An Idiot with Napoleon Disrobed at Birmingham Rep's studio theatre The Door from tonight (Thursday) to Saturday. At Wolverhampton's Arena Theatre are masked drama group Vamos Theatre with A Brave Face tonight and tomorrow, and comedy chaos for all the family with The 4 Clowns of the Apocalypse on Tuesday.

Ex-Strictly Come Dancing pro Brendan Cole brings his All Night Long show to Symphony Hall in Birmingham tomorrow (Friday) and Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre on Tuesday. Contemporary dance fans will head to Birmingham Hippodrome on Friday and Saturday for Ballet British Columbia, Canada's leading modern dance company. There will be Asian dance at Wolverhampton's Arena Theatre on Saturday when Jaivant Patel Dance present Holi: Basant Ke Rang, a celebration of spring dedicated to the memory of Wolverhampton Mayor Elias Mattu.

Paloma on way to the Genting

POP star Paloma Faith returns to the West Midlands following the success of her fourth album, The Architect, with a concert at the Genting Arena on Wednesday, March 13. Hackney-born Paloma, 36, who recently became a mother, is known for hits Changing, Only Love Can Hurt Like This, Picking Up The Pieces, New York, Never Tear Us Apart, Crybaby and Stone Cold Sober. Support from XamVolo. Paloma is back for Forest Live at Cannock Chase on June 29.

'Elvis' back in the building, 50 years on

Fifty years ago Elvis Presley's career was revived by the '68 Comeback Special, a one-off television show aired by American network NBC, and to celebrate that milestone theatre impresario Bill Kenwright brings tribute show This Is Elvis to Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre.

From Monday to Saturday, the touring show will recreate that classic concert and the drama leading up to it with award-winning tribute artist Steve Michaels in the role of Elvis. Steve has played alongside some of Elvis Presley's iconic band mates including the extraordinary Jordanaires and the soulful voices of the Sweet Inspirations.

This Is Elvis includes such hits as Trouble, Heartbreak Hotel, Blue Suede Shoes, Hound Dog, Jailhouse Rock, In The Ghetto and Suspicious Minds.

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SATURDAY'S TV MARCH 17

CHOICE

Will.i.am

The Voice UK (ITV, 8.30pm)
It's the first of the knockout shows as 12 acts sing for a place in the semi-finals. Coaches Jennifer Hudson, Will.i.am, Tom Jones and Olly Murs can pick only one act from their teams to progress in the competition, so there are some tough decisions to make. Helping them are guests Craig David, members of the Black Eyed Peas, Kylie Minogue, Leona Lewis and The Voice UK's reigning champion, Mo Jamil.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Classic Mary Berry. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** MasterChef. (R) **2.15** MasterChef. (R) **3.15** MasterChef. (R) **3.45** Wanted Down Under Revisited. **4.30** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Wales v France (Kick-off 5.00pm).
7.00 BBC News.
7.10 Regional Programme.
7.20 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman welcome Sam Nixon and Mark Rhodes, Ellie Taylor and Milton Jones, Jay Rayner and Thomasina Miers, and Paul Martin and Sara Pascoe to the general knowledge quiz. The famous faces must try to come up with the least likely correct answers to a series of questions posed to members of the public.
8.10 Casualty. Rash's new-found confidence is tested when he treats a prisoner, who also leads Gem into danger. Bea goes up against smarmy F1 Eddie for a place on a coveted training course.
9.00 Troy: Fall of a City. Paris finds himself on the run as a fugitive, hunted by Greek forces intent on avenging the slight that sparked the flames of war. Seeking a safe refuge, he returns to his shepherd roots and the hills where he grew up. Meanwhile, back in Troy, Helen is left without a single ally as Pandarus's investigation gathers momentum, and the Trojans try to exploit divisions among the Greeks. Historical epic, starring Louis Hunter, Jonas Armstrong, Bella Dayne, David Threlfall, David Gyasi and Joseph Mawle.
10.00 BBC News; Weather.; National Lottery Update.
10.20 Match of the Day. Highlights of Bournemouth v West Bromwich Albion, Huddersfield Town v Crystal Palace, Stoke City v Everton and Liverpool v Watford in the Premier League.
11.20 MOTD: FA Cup Highlights. Highlights of Swansea City v Tottenham Hotspur at the Liberty Stadium and Manchester United v Brighton & Hove Albion at Old Trafford.
11.50 Film: Gambit. (2012) Comedy remake, starring Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz and Alan Rickman.
1.10 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.15** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 The Wonder of Animals. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. (R) **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** The Dengineers. **8.00** Absolute Genius: Monster Builds. **8.30** Beyond Bionic. **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Gorilla Family and Me. (R) **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.35** Cats v Dogs: Which Is Best? (R) **12.35** Orson Welles: Talking Pictures. (R) **1.20 Film:** Waterloo. (1970) **3.30** Me and My Dog: The Ultimate Contest. (R) **4.30** Final Score. **5.30** The Repair Shop. (R)
6.00 Hugh's Wild West. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall explores the Somerset Levels, where he visits Worthy Farm, home to Glastonbury Festival, before heading to the Secret World Rescue Centre.
7.00 Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby. Giles Coren and Monica Galetti head to the foothills of the Swiss Alps to experience health and wellness tourism at the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz. (R)
8.00 David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities. The naturalist investigates whether animals and plants have developed an awareness of mathematics, including bamboos that flower exactly the same around the world.
8.30 Dad's Army. Mainwaring and the platoon are asked to provide a guard of honour for a train carrying George VI passing through Walmington-on-Sea. (R)
9.00 Film: Suite Francaise. (2014) Premiere. Passion develops between a woman and the Nazi officer stationed in her home during Germany's occupation of France. Second World War drama, starring Kristin Scott Thomas.
10.40 Performance Live: Winged Bull in the Elephant Case. An immersive performance, combining dance choreographed by Wayne McGregor and others with music and spoken word, filmed underground and in London's National Gallery.
11.10 Film: Defiance. (2008) Three Jewish brothers escape into the woods during the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland, and launch a series of guerrilla attacks on German forces. As word of their actions spreads, other refugees join them to form a larger resistance movement. Second World War drama, starring Daniel Craig.
1.15 Civilisations. (R) **2.15** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Bagel and Becky Show. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **11.50** ITV News; Weather. **12.00** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Italy v Scotland (Kick-off 12.30pm). **2.25** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. England v Ireland (Kick-off 2.45pm). **5.00** The Chase. (R)
6.00 ITV News; Weather.
6.15 Regional Programme; Weather.
6.30 New You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, including footage of a golfer being surprised by an alligator, and a child being fired into a belfry.
7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. George Ezra opens the show with a performance of his new hit, as well as joining Ant and Dec on stage for the End of The Show Show. Ashley and Jordan Banjo from dance troupe Diversity are pushed to their limits in the return of Get Out Of My Ear! Stephen Mulhern and Scarlett Moffatt join in the fun, and†another player gets the chance to Win the Ads.
8.30 The Voice UK. The first of the knockout shows as 12 acts sing for a place in the semi-finals. Guests include Craig David, members of the Black Eyed Peas and Kylie Minogue.
10.30 ITV News; Weather.
10.45 Film: Fast & Furious. (2009) News of a friend's murder brings international fugitive Dominic Toretto back to his home city of Los Angeles in search of revenge. It is not long before his pursuit leads him to cross paths with FBI agent Brian O'Conner, and despite their hostile feelings toward each other, the pair work together to bring down those responsible. Thriller sequel, starring Vin Diesel, Paul Walker, Michelle Rodriguez and Jordana Brewster.
12.45 Play to the Whistle. (R) **1.30** Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.00 Winter Paralympics Live. **8.00** Winter Paralympics Breakfast. **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.55** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.25** The Simpsons. (R) **12.55** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25 Film:** Casper. (1995) Supernatural family comedy, starring Christina Ricci. **3.20** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. (R) **4.25** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R) **5.30** Winter Paralympics Today.
6.30 Channel 4 News.
7.00 Penelope Keith's Coastal Villages. The actress discovers the idyllic coastal villages of East Anglia. She travels by train to the Edwardian holiday resort of Weybourne, and goes dredging at Cley next the Sea. Penelope also hears a scandalous take in Stiffkey, and heads to Thorpeness, Suffolk, to visit a village inspired by the tale of Peter Pan. Finally, she takes in the ancient settlement of Dunwich and ends her journey at Walberswick.
8.00 Britain at Low Tide. Tori Herridge explores the Severn Estuary, visiting the site of a medieval village that disappeared into the sea and finding out how important the ferry crossing at Aust once was.
9.00 Film: Fantastic Four. (2015) Premiere. A gifted young scientist joins a secret project researching inter-dimensional travel, and return from a journey to another world granted superhuman powers. Their abilities make them the only hope for Earth's survival when a colleague who was lost on their expedition returns to wreak vengeance. Superhero adventure, starring Miles Teller, Michael B Jordan, Kate Mara and Jamie Bell.
10.55 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. Jon Richardson and Michelle Wolf take on guest captain Jonathan Ross with Johnny Vegas, while three-man comedy act Pappy's helps out in Dictionary Corner. Last in the series. (R)
11.55 The Inbetweeners. The friends prepare for their exams. Simon makes progress with Carli by helping her revise, and the gang members get together to reminisce about the past year. Last in the series. (R)
12.30 Winter Paralympics Live. **5.35** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.05** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** The Gadget Show. (R) **11.35** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.35** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.30** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.30** The Nightmare Neighbour Next Door. (R) **3.30** The Nightmare Neighbour Next Door. (R) **4.30** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **5.25** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R)
6.25 5 News Weekend.
6.30 FIA Formula E Live. The Punta del Este ePrix. Vernon Kay presents coverage of the sixth round of the campaign, which is held in Punta del Este, Uruguay.
8.10 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Documentary giving an insight into cash-strapped Britain from the perspectives of debtors, creditors and those who collect the payments, including High Court enforcement bailiffs and repossession teams. The series follows each case as it unfolds, recording the thoughts and feelings on both sides, the process of repossession and the impact it has on all involved. (R)
9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights of the weekend's games, including Leeds United v Sheffield Wednesday at Elland Road, Barnsley v Millwall at Oakwell, Wolverhampton Wanderers v Burton Albion at Molineux and Bolton Wanderers v Aston Villa at the Macron Stadium.
10.00 Football on 5: Goal Rush. Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including Oxford United v Peterborough United and Rochdale v AFC Wimbledon.
10.30 Live: Hayemaker Fight Night. Matt Askin v Stephen Simmons and Joe Joyce v Donnie Palmer. Coverage of the respective cruiserweight and heavyweight bouts, which take place at the York Hall in Bethnal Green.
12.00 SuperCasino. Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.10** Cowboy Builders. (R) **4.45** House Doctor. A compilation edition of the home improvement series, with interior designer Ann Maurice revisits some of her most striking transformations of kitchens and dining rooms. (R) **5.10** House Busters. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Lost Kingdoms of Central America **8.00** The Silk Road **9.00** Below the Surface **10.30** TOTP2 **11.15** Irish Rock at the BBC **12.15** Top of the Pops: 1985 **1.15** Lost Kingdoms of Central America **2.15** The Silk Road **3.15** TOTP2 **4.00** Close
ITV2
11.45 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **1.20 Film:** License to Wed (2007) **2.25** FYI Daily **2.30 Film:** License to Wed (2007) **3.05 Film:** Dirty Dancing 2: Havana Nights (2004) **4.10** FYI Daily **4.15 Film:** Dirty Dancing 2: Havana Nights (2004) **4.55 Film:** Evan Almighty (2007) **5.55** FYI Daily **6.00 Film:** Evan Almighty (2007) **6.50 Film:** Gravity (2013) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00 Film:** Gravity (2013) **8.30 Film:** Pacific Rim (2013) **9.30** FYI Daily **9.35 Film:** Pacific Rim (2013) **11.10** Family Guy **12.10** American Dad! **1.05** Action Team **1.35** Ibiza Weekender **2.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.45** Teleshopping **5.45** ITV2 Nightscreen
ITV3
1.10 Inspector Morse **3.25 Film:** Columbo: Playback (1975) **5.00** Vera **7.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Inspector Morse **1.10** The Good Karma Hospital **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
1.30 ITV Racing Live from Uttoxeter. **4.00 Film:** How the West Was Won (1962) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10 Film:** How the West Was Won (1962) **7.10** Storage Wars **8.00 Film:** Jaws: The Revenge (1987) **9.05** FYI Daily **9.10 Film:** Jaws: The Revenge (1987) **9.50 Film:** Wanted (2008) **10.55** FYI Daily **11.00 Film:** Wanted (2008) **12.00 Film:** The Dictator (2012) **1.00** FYI Daily **1.05 Film:** The Dictator (2012) **1.45** Minder **2.35** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping
E4
12.15 Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **12.30** The Goldbergs **1.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.00** Young Sheldon **2.30** The Big Bang Theory **4.00** The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer **5.15** Extreme Cake Makers **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** The World's End (2013) **11.10** Gogglebox **12.15** Five Star Hotel **3.20** Timeless **4.05** How I Met Your Mother **4.45** Rude(ish) Tube
Film4
11.00 Rio (2011) **1.00** Step Up All In (2014) **3.10** Hulk (2003) **5.50** Avatar (2009) **9.00** R.I.P.D (2013) **10.55** The Pyramid (2014) **12.40** Citadel (2012) **2.20** Maniac (2012) **4.00** Close

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CHOICE

Keeley Hawes

The Durrells (ITV, 8pm)

New series. In the first episode of a new series, the family are surprised to find out that Leslie has three different girlfriends, so Louisa decides to take it upon herself to help him pick one by having each member of the family invite their favourite girl to afternoon tea. Larry injures his leg and Theo decides to use his newly set-up x-ray unit to try and examine it. Elsewhere, Gerry continues to grow his animal collection, Margo takes up a job as Theo's assistant, and Aunt Hermione arrives in Corfu for good.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.25** Match of the Day. (R) **8.30** MOTD: FA Cup Highlights. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Lifeline. **12.25** Songs of Praise. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** MOTD Live: The FA Cup. Wigan Athletic v Southampton (Kick-off 1.30pm). **3.35** A Question of Sport. (R) **4.05** MOTD Live: The FA Cup. Leicester City v Chelsea (Kick-off 4.30pm).

6.35 BBC News.

6.50 Regional Programme.

7.00 Countryfile. Ellie Harrison travels to Pembrokeshire to assess the effects of recent storms on the area's coastline. Adam Henson visits Scotland's Rural College to look at the latest research into reducing farming's impact on global warming, while Tom Heap looks at declining sales in lamb, and learns about the problems this has caused for the UK's sheep farmers.

8.00 Hold the Sunset. Bob suggests that Roger apply to become his mother's paid carer – but the only problem is that she is in perfect health, so he needs someone more in need of support to pose as her.

8.30 Film: Brooklyn. (2015) Premiere. An Irish woman living with her mother in the 1950s decides to make a fresh start in America. She makes her home in New York, and falls in love. However, her past catches up with her when she receives bad news from Ireland, and faces a harsh choice between her two homes. Drama based on Colm Toibin's novel, starring Saoirse Ronan, Domhnall Gleeson, Jim Broadbent and Julie Walters.

10.10 BBC News.

10.30 Regional Programme.

10.40 Paddy McGuinness' Sport Relief Warm Up. The host rows, walks and jogs from his home to the Sport Relief studio in Salford, and along the way looks at highlights from past events and offers previews of Sport Relief 2018.

11.40 Film: The Sentinel. (2006) A secret service agent is framed for murder as he tries to expose a neo-Nazi militant who has infiltrated the White House. Spy thriller, with Michael Douglas and Kiefer Sutherland.

1.20 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.25** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 Coast. (R) **7.05** The Instant Gardener. (R) **7.50** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.20** Countryfile. (R) **9.15** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **10.45** Spring Kitchen with Tom Kerridge. (R) **11.30** Lorraine Pascale: How to Be a Better Cook. (R) **12.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **12.45** The Ladykillers: Pest Detectives. (R) **1.45** Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago. (R) **2.45** Money for Nothing. (R) **3.45** The World's Most Extraordinary Homes. (R) **4.45** Back in Time for Tea. (R) **5.45 Film:** Catch Me If You Can. (2002) Fact-based drama, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks.

8.00 Top Gear. Matt LeBlanc tests the world's fastest-accelerating car, with a little help from NASA. Chris Harris pens a heartfelt love letter to the Citroen 2CV, while Rory Reid samples some exciting cars from South Korea. Dara O Briain and Ed Byrne are the studio guests.

9.00 Famously Unfit for Sport Relief. Entertainer Les Dennis, presenter Susannah Constantine, actress Tameka Empson and comedian Miles Jupp embark on a muscle-grinding mission to regain their fitness. Cameras follow the foursome over a 10-week period as they run, climb and swim their way back to fitness, culminating in one of the UK's hardest and most demanding physical challenges – which sees the quartet tackle a muddy and exhausting assault course in freezing temperatures. The programme also features visits to two projects in the UK, illustrating some of the ways in which money raised through the fund helps vulnerable people.

10.00 The Mash Report. Nish Kumar and a cast of comedy correspondents present the satirical and surreal take on the week's news. (R)

10.30 Top Gear: Extra Gear. Rory Reid puts his engineering skills to the challenge of building a rear wheel drive car. With guests touring car champion Chris Turkington and comedian Brennan Reece.

10.55 Women's Six Nations Highlights. Action from the final round of fixtures, which were England v Ireland at the Ricoh Arena, Wales v France at Parc Eirias and Italy v Scotland at the Stadio Plebiscito.

11.25 Film: Being Blacker. (2018)

12.55 Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **1.55** Holby City. (R) **2.55** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Love Your Garden. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **10.55** The Voice UK. (R) **12.55** ITV News; Weather. **1.00** Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. (R) **2.30** What Would Your Kid Do? (R) **3.30** The Harbour. (R) **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.00 Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs. An abandoned puppy is brought in with a skin condition that is so severe the vets are unable to determine its breed, and Paul tries to prepare his dog for a neutering operation. (R)

6.30 ITV News; Weather.

6.45 Regional Programme; Weather.

7.00 Celebrity Catchphrase. Stephen Mulhern hosts a celebrity special of the guessing game, challenging Chris Kamara, Stacey Solomon and Catherine Tyldesley to see it and say it.

8.00 The Durrells. New series. In the first episode of a new series, the family are surprised to find out that Leslie has three different girlfriends, and Aunt Hermione arrives in Corfu for good.

9.00 The Good Karma Hospital. New series. Ruby encounters new challenges as a blistering heatwave hits Kerala, while Lydia decides she is ready for her first solo night shift. But when a storm hits Barco, Ruby faces an agonising test that stretches her medical skills to the limits. Return of the medical drama set in southern India, starring Amrita Acharia and Amanda Redman.

10.05 ITV News; Weather.

10.20 Peston on Sunday. (R)

11.15 Six Nations Highlights. Jill Douglas presents action from the final round of fixtures, featuring England v Ireland, Wales v France and Italy v Scotland.

12.10 Marcella. (R) **1.00** Jackpot247. **3.00** Take on the Twisters. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.30 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **6.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.25** Mobil 1: The Grid. **8.00** Winter Paralympics Breakfast. **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Winter Paralympics Today. **2.00** Winter Paralympics Closing Ceremony. Coverage from PyeongChang Olympic Stadium in South Korea. **3.15 Film:** Epic. (2013) Animated adventure, with the voice of Amanda Seyfried. **5.15** The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer. (R)

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Britain's Polar Bear Cub. Behind the scenes at the Highland Wildlife Park near Kingussie in Inverness-shire, following efforts to breed the nation's first polar bear cub for 25 years as keepers mate Arktos with Victoria. Cameras reveal the highs and lows of the staff's attempts to breed one of the world's most recognisable and endangered animals.

8.00 Escape to the Chateau. New series. Series following a British family restoring a French chateau. As summer arrives, Dick Strawbridge and Angel Adoree are busier than ever with seven weddings and 14 food lovers' weekends to prepare for. And as if that wasn't enough to keep them busy, they must also sort out the garden, work on a stables conversion and embark on a surprising floating adventure.

9.00 Homeland. Carrie puts a plan in motion, Saul visits a source and Keane makes a desperate plea. Espionage drama, starring Claire Danes, Mandy Patinkin and Elizabeth Marvel.

10.05 13 Commandments. New series. A provincial Belgian town is rocked by the murder of a 16-year-old girl and the case takes a shocking turn. Crime thriller, starring Dirk Van Dijck. In Flemish.

11.00 Film: Solace. (2015) A psychic helps the FBI to identify a serial killer, but realises the murderer has mental powers of his own. Crime thriller, starring Anthony Hopkins and Colin Farrell.

12.55 The Last Leg. With guest Claudia Winkleman. (R) **1.50** The Job Interview. (R) **2.45** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **3.25** Gillette World Sport. **3.55** Undercover: Who's Policing Your Bank? – Channel 4 Dispatches. (R) **4.25** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.20** Food Unwrapped. (R) **5.45** Kirstie's Homemade Home. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wissper. (R) **6.20** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.30** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.35** The Secret Life of Puppies. (R) **6.40** Mofy. (R) **6.45** Simon. (R) **6.50** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.10** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.25** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.40** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.50** Blaze and the Monster Machines. **8.10** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.30** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.45** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.15** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.30** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.50** Peppa Pig. (R) **10.00** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **10.55** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.25 Film:** Getting Even with Dad. (1994) **1.30 Film:** Richie Rich. (1994) Family comedy, starring Macaulay Culkin. **3.15 Film:** My Girl. (1991) Drama, starring Anna Chlumsky and Macaulay Culkin. **4.15** 5 News Update. **4.20 Film:** My Girl. (1991) Concluded. **5.20 Film:** Junior. (1994) Comedy, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

7.20 Film: Jumper. (2008) A man discovers he has the ability to teleport, a talent he cleverly exploits to rob banks undetected while living a life of luxury all over the world. However, he soon learns he is not the only one with this power – and that a secret society of religious fanatics is determined to wipe out him and all of his kind. Fantasy thriller, with Hayden Christensen, Jamie Bell and Samuel L Jackson.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Film: The Equalizer. (2014) A retired secret agent applies his talents to the task of helping victims of injustice. When he witnesses a prostitute being beaten up by a pimp, he kills the man, an act that draws him into a battle to the death with a Russian crime syndicate. Action thriller based on the 1980s TV series, starring Denzel Washington and Chloe Grace Moretz.

10.00 5 News Update.

10.05 Film: The Equalizer. (2014) Concluded.

11.35 Film: The Expendables 2. (2012) The mercenary team battles a rival band of hired guns who have killed one of their number. Action thriller sequel, starring Sylvester Stallone and Jean-Claude Van Damme.

1.35 SuperCasino. **3.10** Cowboy Builders. (R) **4.00** World's Most Pampered Pets. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Ancient Greece: The Greatest Show on Earth **9.00** Andrew Marr on Churchill: Blood, Sweat and Oil Paint **10.00 Film:** 13 Minutes (2015) **11.45** The Riviera: A History in Pictures **1.45** Ancient Greece: The Greatest Show on Earth **2.45** Andrew Marr on Churchill: Blood, Sweat and Oil Paint **3.45** Sounds of the Seventies **4.00** Close

ITV2

12.55 The Voice UK **2.55 Film:** Happy Feet (2006) **3.55** FYI Daily **4.00 Film:** Happy Feet (2006) **5.05 Film:** Hotel Transylvania 2 (2015) **6.05** FYI Daily **6.10 Film:** Hotel Transylvania 2 (2015) **7.00 Film:** The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor (2008) **8.00** FYI Daily **8.05 Film:** The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor (2008) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.25 Film:** Keith Lemon: The Film (2012) **1.30** FYI Daily **1.35 Film:** Keith Lemon: The Film (2012) **2.05** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records

ITV3

7.00 Murder, She Wrote **8.00** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs **9.00** Joanna Lumley's Trans-Siberian Adventure **10.00 Film:** The Theory of Everything (2014) **12.30** Inspector Morse **2.25** Blue Murder **3.40** Rising Damp **4.05** Road to Avonlea

ITV4

11.50 FYI Daily **11.55 Film:** How the West Was Won (1962) **2.00** Goodwood Members Meeting. **4.00** Hornblower **6.10 Film:** On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969) **7.25** FYI Daily **7.30 Film:** On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969) **9.00 Film:** Windtalkers (2002) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** Windtalkers (2002) **11.50 Film:** Above the Law (1988) **12.50** FYI Daily **12.55 Film:** Above the Law (1988) **1.55** River Monsters **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

12.20 The Big Bang Theory **4.20** The Goldbergs **4.50** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.50** Young Sheldon **6.20** The Big Bang Theory **6.50 Film:** School of Rock (2003) **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00 Film:** 2 Guns (2013) **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **1.05** Five Star Hotel **3.00** First Dates Abroad **3.25** Hollyoaks

Film4

1.00 Anastasia (1997) **2.50** Bridge to Terabithia (2007) **4.40** One Fine Day (1996) **6.50** Crocodile Dundee II (1988) **9.00** Terminator Genisys (2015) **11.25** The King's Speech (2010) **1.40** Force Majeure (2014) **4.00** Close

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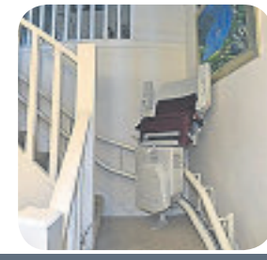

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PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
A Deadly Affair, Channel 5, 3.20pm
Suspecting her husband Charlie of having an affair, author Mary trails him to the house he has been renovating, only to find his dead body. As she is having her own fling, Mary becomes the lead suspect in her spouse's murder. Thriller, starring Valerie Azlynn, Austin Highsmith and Luke Edwards. (2017)

TUESDAY
The Expendables 3, Channel 5, 10pm
Soldier of fortune Barney Ross discovers an old friend he was forced to kill is still alive, and has become a powerful arms dealer with vengeance on his mind. Barney is forced to recruit a new band of mercenaries and adopt more modern tactics to deal with this threat to him and his past associates. Action thriller sequel, starring Sylvester Stallone and Mel Gibson. (2014)

Under Siege, Thursday, Channel 5, 10pm

WEDNESDAY
A Walk Among the Tombstones, Channel 5, 9pm
An ex cop working as an unlicensed private eye is hired by a drug trafficker to find the men who murdered his wife. As the detective investigates the case, he discovers the men he is tracking have killed many times before and takes desperate measures to stop them claiming another victim. Crime thriller based on Lawrence Block's novel, starring Liam Neeson and Dan Stevens. (2014)

THURSDAY
Under Siege, Channel 5, 10pm
Terrorists infiltrate a US battleship in a carefully orchestrated move to steal its arsenal of nuclear weapons, unaware the ship's resourceful cook - a veteran US Navy Seal - and a scantily clad stripper are about to foil their plans. Action adventure, starring Steven Seagal, Erika Eleniak, Gary Busey and Tommy Lee Jones. (1992)

FRIDAY
The Net, Channel 4, 12.10am
A computer analyst has to prove her true identity after her details are replaced by a false police record on the national database. Thriller, with Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam, Dennis Miller and Diane Baker. (1995)

The stars are out to shine in the aid of a good cause

Whether you're a couch potato or a seasoned sprinter, we hope you have been on your feet this week and making your steps count.

In the lead up to tonight's Sport Relief, the Billion Steps Challenge has been taking place as the British public have been encouraged to get active, have fun and raise cash to help people living tough lives both in the UK and around the world.

For the first time, tonight's show comes live from Salford, with the mayhem beginning at 7pm as Gary Lineker, Davina McCall and Ore Oduba welcome viewers. Throughout the night, the baton is then passed to Paddy McGuinness, Claudia Winkleman and Freddie Flintoff as they guide viewers into the early hours.

As is always the case with Sport Relief, a host of famous faces will be stepping into unfamiliar territory, all in the name of entertainment and fundraising.

Celebrity Boxing makes a comeback, as six fearless stars don their gloves and mouth guards and take to the ring for a triple-bill of bouts. Wayne Bridge faces Spencer Matthews, Hannah Spearritt goes head to head with Vanessa White and Camilla Thurlow takes on Helen Skelton.

Also during the evening, comedian John Bishop lands a role he could only have dreamt of and sets out on a mission to help England win the World Cup.

We'll see a Clash Of The Channels Boat Race, while Sue Barker hosts a special edition of quiz A Question of Sport.

There will be regular visits to 5-Live-A-Side outside the studio, where Robbie Savage's celebrity all-star team are attempting a whopping 12 hours of non-stop football.

Strictly Come Dancing brings a welcome dose of glitz and glamour to the evening as three football legends – Alex Scott, Chris Kamara and David Ginola – don their sequins and show us their fancy footwork.

Throughout the night, there will be a look into how money raised through Sport Relief can help vulnerable people in the UK and across the world to live happier, healthier, safer lives, with a special focus this year on maternal health, malaria and mental health.

There will be updates on Zoe Ball who has been taking part in a cycle challenge from Blackpool to Brighton to raise mental health awareness, after the death of her boyfriend, cameraman Billy Yates, last year.

Zoe says: "I wanted to do something for him. One in four people is living with mental illness. That's a lot of people struggling."

In 2016, Radio 1 DJ Greg James finished five triathlons in five days in five cities and raised over £750,000.

This year, he has taken part in another epic challenge, officially named Pedal To The Peaks, but nicknamed the Gregathlon.

He said: "My last challenge was unbelievably difficult but I think we're about to top it. This challenge is even more ridiculous."

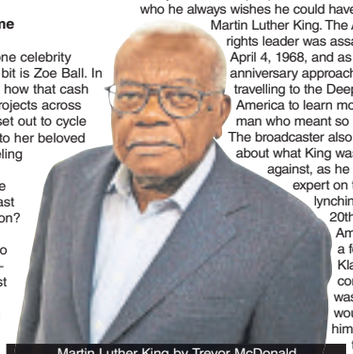
The biennial fundraiser, Sport Relief 2018, Friday, BBC1, 7pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Marcella
ITV, 9pm
Retracing the route of the lorry and the car from the train crash, the team is able to deduce the area in which Adam was picked up and the vehicle was stolen. Officers are dispatched to the area and come across an old abandoned house with a bloody handprint on the door and what they find inside the house shocks Marcella and Rav to their core as the true scale of the killer's crimes become apparent.

TUESDAY
The World's Ugliest Pets
ITV, 8pm
The Internet is awash with pictures of perfect pugs, cutesy kittens and beautiful bunnies. But what about the ugly ones? This one-off programme celebrates the pets who haven't been blessed with beauty, as animal lover Caroline Quentin shares her love for 'fugly' (fabulously-ugly) furry friends. The show features everything from hairless guinea pigs to one-eyed dogs and follows Caroline as she journeys to the mecca of mutt-ugly animals: The World's Ugliest Dog Contest in Petaluma, California. Starting her journey in the UK, Caroline meets some of the country's ugliest pets and explores why Brits love an underdog. Then she will choose the UK's ugliest pooch to represent the nation, before crossing the Atlantic to California, along with the dog and its owner, to fly the flag for Britain's 'fugly' pets.

WEDNESDAY
Zoe Ball's Hardest Road Home
BBC1, 9pm
It's Sports Relief this week and one celebrity who's been doing more than her bit is Zoe Ball. In a bid to raise money – and show how that cash helps to support mental health projects across the UK – the Radio 2 presenter set out to cycle from her birthplace of Blackpool to her beloved hometown of Brighton. It's a grueling undertaking for a novice cyclist, especially given the unpredictable nature of the weather over the past few weeks, but how did Zoe get on? This documentary follows her progress as she pushes herself to the physical and emotional limit – although on the plus side, at least she gets to pass some historic sites and iconic landmarks along the way. We'll also get an insight into what motivated Ball to take on such a huge challenge.


Martin Luther King by Trevor McDonald, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

THURSDAY
Martin Luther King by Trevor McDonald
ITV, 9pm
Throughout his career, Trevor McDonald has met many remarkable people. However, there is one man who he always wishes he could have spoken to – Martin Luther King. The American civil rights leader was assassinated on April 4, 1968, and as the 50th anniversary approaches, McDonald is travelling to the Deep South of America to learn more about the man who meant so much to him. The broadcaster also discovers more about what King was fighting against, as he speaks to an expert on the horrors of lynching in 20th-century America and meets a former Ku Klux Klan member who confesses there was a time when he would have targeted him because of the colour of his skin.

FRIDAY
Live International Football
ITV, 7.30pm
Netherlands v England (Kick-off 7.45pm). Mark Pougatch presents all the action from the friendly at the Johan Cruyff Arena, as England began preparations for the World Cup. Gareth Southgate's men qualified for the finals unbeaten, but he will still feel there is room for improvement as he looks to find his strongest team ahead of the finals in Russia. Despite finishing third four years ago and as runners-up in 2010, the Dutch have failed to qualify for the World Cup this time around and are now looking to rebuild under the guidance of new manager Ronald Koeman, who had spells as boss of Southampton and Everton. With analysis from Ian Wright, Lee Dixon and Patrick Kluivert, and commentary by Clive Tyldesley and Glenn Hoddle.

Britain's Favourite Food
Channel 4, 8pm
Simon Rimmer looks at some of the nation's favourite branded foods, which found fame in a past era. In the first of two programmes, the cook and restaurant tells the story of Angel Delight, revisits the golden summer of 1979 with lollies like Zoom and Fab, relates the amazing tale of Blue Nun and the wine the French allegedly adored - Le Piat d'Or.

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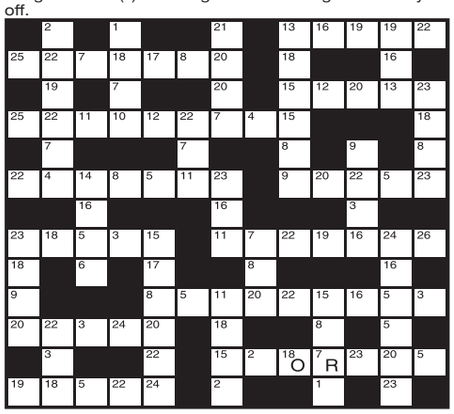
No.471

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



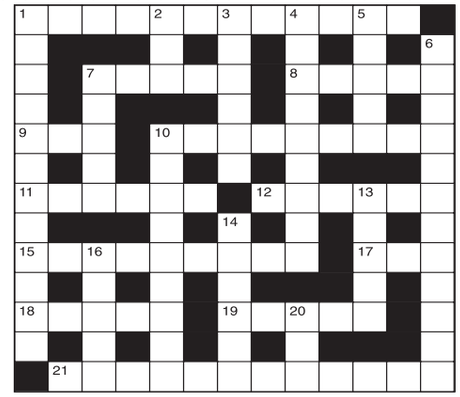
1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18 O
6	19
7 R	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Z	O	J	N	G	I	B	E	L	W	U	A	X
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
H	S	M	C	K	Y	Q	P	T	V	R	D	F

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Where they are well-endowed to deal with complaints? (6,6)
7. Some support for the workers (5)
8. A quaintly pleasing French accent (5)
9. Finished up with paid help (3)
10. Finished after only half the distance and stretched out (9)
11. Country hat (6)
12. Hang about as many fish (6)
15. Little known, but giving one credit (9)
17. No alternative (3)
18. One is about to make a racket (5)
19. Put a watch on (5)
21. Condenses Enid's solo act, perhaps (12)

Down

1. Successor clearly seen (4,8)
2. Food and drink (3)
3. Don't agree it's rubbish (6)
4. Deadlock with an old friend (9)
5. Drinks and a sandwich (5)
6. A quality we don't care to show (12)
7. Battle for the chairman's seat? (5)
10. Bullies those who work around the pit (9)
13. Ridiculed a conductor, we hear (5)
14. He has a part in a Shakespeare play, but may be fired (6)
16. The atmosphere in a small company may be capital (5)
20. It's not sensible to stop up (3)

Quick Clues:

Across

1. U.S. port (3,9)
7. Later (5)
8. Coach (5)
9. Fasten (3)
10. Perfume (9)
11. One who goes naked (6)
12. Amend (6)
15. Tomb (9)
17. Tavern (3)
18. Boxing ring (5)
19. Sea (5)
21. In various places (4,3,5)

Down

1. Meteor (8,4)
2. Decay (3)
3. Usual (6)
4. Interpose (9)
5. Fetter (5)
6. Endless (12)
7. In front (5)
10. Continuous shooting (9)
13. Constellation (5)
14. Flung (6)
16. Portion (5)
20. Consume (3)

Sudoku

		3			4	7		
	2						3	
9		5	6		3			1
5			9		6			2
	8			4			5	9
2			1		8			7
4			7		9	2		6
	1						8	
		6		2		5		

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

3	2	8	5	1	9	7	4	6
1	4	7	6	3	2	8	9	5
9	5	6	4	7	8	1	3	2
5	3	9	7	8	1	2	6	4
4	7	2	9	5	6	3	1	8
6	8	1	2	4	3	9	5	7
2	9	5	3	6	7	4	8	1
8	6	3	1	2	4	5	7	9
7	1	4	8	9	5	6	2	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 4 Fairway; 8 Reason; 9 Upstart; 10 Tuscan; 11 Reeled; 12 Organdie; 18 Fatalist; 20 Manage; 21 Skater; 22 Straits; 23 Intone; 24 Addenda. Down: 1 Oration; 2 Passage; 3 Domain; 5 Apparent; 6 Rather; 7 Agreed; 13 Defeated; 14 Fiction; 15 Started; 16 Matted; 17 Garage; 19 Asking.
QUICK - Across: 4 Variety; 8 Opined; 9 Account; 10 Cougar; 11 Spined; 12 Penitent; 18 Commence; 20 Colour; 21 Struck; 22 Comical; 23 Detain; 24 Lengthy.
Down: 1 Concept; 2 Piquant; 3 Depart; 5 Accustom; 6 Ironic; 7 Tinged; 13 Encroach; 14 Inhuman; 15 Weakens; 16 Morose; 17 Coming; 19 Mutter.

Quiz

1. In the Arabian Nights, how many journeys did Sinbad make?
2. What is the administrative capital of Bolivia?
3. Which US state is nicknamed the Beehive State?
4. What is the Lord Chancellor's seat in the House of Lords called?
5. What is the capital of Rwanda?
6. Which drug yields both morphine and codeine?
7. Which architect designed London's Chelsea Hospital?
8. What is the longest river in Europe?
9. Who was the Roman god of fire and destruction?
10. Which Canadian territory's capital is Whitehorse?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Kentucky Derby; 2 Pandora; 3 Assyrian; 4 A lizard; 5 Fremantle; 6 Judo; 7 Tree; 8 US Independence; 9 Zaire; 10 Ceefax.

Niner: MANGROVES

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

2785328 gives a British city,
6422 gives a second British city,
123496 gives a British town.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Link-detached in popular and much requested area

Situated in a popular and much requested location, 211a Wolverhampton Road, Pelsall, Walsall, is a pleasantly appointed link detached three-bedroomed house.

It is for sale through Skitts Estate Agents at £229,950.

Having gas central heating and double glazing, it really needs to be viewed in order to be truly appreciated.

It has a porch, an entrance hall with stairs off, a lounge with a feature fireplace with an electric fire, a window to the front and a sliding glazed door to the extended dining room, which in turn has French-style doors to the rear garden.

The re-fitted kitchen has a matching range of wall and base cupboard units with roll edge work surfaces over, an inset four-ring gas hob with an extractor fan above, an integrated electric oven with a grill above, a door to an under stairs storage cupboard, a window to the rear and a door to the utility room and doors off to the downstairs WC and garage.

Off the first floor landing is an airing cupboard housing a wall-mounted Baxi combination boiler.

Bedroom one has fitted wardrobes and a dressing table and a window to the front.

Bedroom two has a window to the rear, while bedroom three has a window to the front.

The family bathroom has a white suite comprising of a P-shaped bath with a mixer tap and a mixer shower over, a vanity wash hand basin with a mixer tap, low flush W.C and a window to the rear.

Outside to the rear of the property is a generous mature enclosed garden laid mainly to lawn, with a paved patio area and a pathway.

To the front of the property is a lawned fore garden and a block paved driveway, providing ample off-road parking.

The garage has a single glazed internal window into the utility space and door, with a further set of doors to the front elevation.

PELSALL £229,950

TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Skitts
TEL: 01922 478104
EMAIL: bloxwich@skitts.net

KEY FEATURES

- Link detached
- Ideal for a family
- Popular location
- Re-fitted kitchen
- Extended dining room

Chance to buy a countryside haven

Commercial feature

Meadow Bank has made an extraordinary mark on Baldwins Gate with its distinctive charm.

Carefully nestled in the peaceful village, this new development by Kier Living skilfully complements the picturesque Staffordshire countryside, by blending sympathetically with its rural surroundings.

The tranquil street scenes at Meadow Bank have created a natural harmonisation and extension of the village with each new house-type having been handpicked to showcase distinctive exteriors, so it's little wonder why these new homes are proving so immensely popular.

Rachel Fay, Kier Living's sales and marketing director, explained how high interest and visitor levels to the local show homes has resulted in customers "early birding" new homes as far ahead as December 2018.

Demand

"We are very pleased that Meadow Bank is delivering such impressive results and demand from the local market has exceeded all our expectations."

The development is offering much needed two and three bedroom bungalows and two, three and four bedroom family homes.

Due to the high demand, Kier has now released more homes due for completion in June 2018. Furthermore, for anyone living within Staffordshire, Kier Living is offering £1,000 towards their legal fees, as well as carpets on selected plots.

Meadow Bank is a testament to how exquisite contemporary housing pays homage to its local surroundings. The considered approach has resulted in a new sense of collective community within Baldwins Gate, while meeting the demands of local housing needs.

This has been endorsed by independent customer satisfaction survey results, where over 90 per cent of new home owners would recommend purchasing a new home from Kier Living.

For further information about the new homes at Meadow Bank visit the sales office Thursday to Monday, 10am to 5pm.

Two and three bedroom bungalows and two, three and four bedroom family homes are available on the Kier Living development at Baldwins Gate

Cottons
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FLAT 8 BRIDGE LOFTS. 3 LEICESTER STREET, WALSALL

LAND ADJ TO 5 HILTON ROAD, LANESFIELD, WOLVERHAMPTON

13A PARK AVENUE, WOLVERHAMPTON

LAND FRONTING CLIFTON LANE, WEST BROMWICH

DORDON WMC, 215/217 LONG STREET, DORDON, TAMWORTH

96 HOLLY LANE, WALSALL WOOD, WALSALL

40-52 HIGH STREET, WEDNESFIELD, WOLVERHAMPTON

Forthcoming Auction

Cottons CHARTERED SURVEYORS

TUESDAY 27TH MARCH 2018

to be held at The Aston Villa Football Club

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DEFINITION OF GUIDE PRICES
The guide price is an indication of the seller's current minimum price expectation at auction and the guide price, or range of guide prices, is given to assist prospective purchasers. The guide price can be adjusted by the seller at any time up to the day of the auction in light of the interest shown during the marketing period and bidders will be notified of this change on our website and by the auctioneer prior to the lot being offered.

DEFINITION OF RESERVE PRICE
The reserve price is the seller's minimum acceptable price at auction and the figure below which the auctioneer cannot sell. It is usual, but not always the case that a provisional reserve is agreed between the seller and the auctioneer at the start of marketing and the Final Reserve Price will be agreed between the auctioneer and the seller prior to the auction sale. Whilst the reserve price is confidential it will usually be set within the quoted guide range and in any event will not exceed the highest quoted guide price.

PADDOCK ADJ 6 ST.MARYS CLOSE, SEDGLEY

94 HIGH STREET, WEDNESFIELD, WOLVERHAMPTON

Well-presented semi has two double bedrooms

DARLASTON
£110,000 <<<

This extremely well presented two-bedroomed semi-detached house in King Edward Street, Darlaston, is for sale through L&S Prestige Estates at £110,000.

Its living accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hall, two reception rooms, a fitted kitchen and a family bathroom.

To the first floor are two double bedrooms.

The property benefits from having double glazing and gas central heating throughout.

To the outside there is a small walled fore garden and a fully enclosed garden to the rear with a lawned area and paved patio.

The property is well situated within easy range of all local amenities and excellent transport links.

Contact L&S Prestige Estates on 01902 606 595.

Semi-detached is ideal family home

BLOXWICH
£225,000

This superbly presented modern-style semi-detached family home in Catches Drive, Bloxwich, Walsall, is for sale through Skitts Estate Agents at £225,000.

Having versatile living accommodation, this includes a lounge, an open plan breakfast kitchen, three double bedrooms plus a ground floor study/fourth bedroom, a bathroom, an en-suite shower room, a ground floor WC, double glazing, gas central heating, off-road parking and an enclosed rear garden.

This home is close to Bloxwich town and has a driveway and a garage.

For further information contact Skitts on 01922 478 104 or visit www.skitts.net

SDL AUCTIONS
BIGWOOD

28TH MARCH 2018
Aston Villa Football Ground
Starting at 10:30am

AUCTION

117 LOTS To include properties on behalf of:
Plus properties on behalf of Receivers/Housing Associations

Birmingham City Council | Walsall Council | GVA | Canal & River Trust

52 Lichfield Road, Walsall
Well Appointed 5 Bed House
Guide: £260,000+ (plus fees)

20 The Rise, Great Barr
3 Bed Semi-Detached House
Guide: £50,000+ (plus fees)

100 Borneo Street, Walsall
3 Bed Mid Terraced House
Guide: £50,000+ (plus fees)

42 Westmore Way, Wednesbury
3 Bed Detached House
Guide: £50,000+ (plus fees)

12 Regent Street, Willenhall
2 Bed Mid Terraced House
Guide: £30,000+ (plus fees)

4 Himley Close, Willenhall
3 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: £50,000+ (plus fees)

39 Hadley Road, Walsall
3 Bed End Terraced House
Guide: £35,000+ (plus fees)

341 Birmingham Road, Great Barr
4 Bed Detached Bungalow which maybe Suitable for Development*
Guide: £170,000+ (plus fees)

22 The Precinct, Lucknow Road, Willenhall
Long Leasehold 3 Bed Maisonette
Guide: £35,000 (plus fees)

98 Blakenhall Lane, Walsall
Residential Investment Property
Current Gross Income: £23,700pa
Guide: £128,000-£133,000 (plus fees)

Vacant Residential Properties, Residential Investments, Vacant Commercial Properties, Commercial Investments, Land/Development Opportunities, Garages & Ground Rents

0121 233 5046 **www.sdlauctions.co.uk** **@SDLA_Bigwood**

Each property is subject to a Reserve Price which would ordinarily be within + or – 10% of the quoted Guide Price. Therefore the property may not be able to be purchased at the quoted Guide Price. Both Guide and Reserve Prices can be subject to change up to and including the day of the auction. For a full explanation go to www.sdlauctions.co.uk/glossary. All Guide Prices are subject to additional non-optional fees, including the buyers administration fee. For the Energy Performance Rating of each property please refer to the legal pack, our catalogue or website. Please contact our office for further details or advice.
*Subject to obtaining necessary planning permission

Stylish modern home lies in a much sought after location

BLOXWICH
£165,000 <<<

This family home in Wetherby Road, Turnberry, Bloxwich, lies in a sought-after cul-de-sac location and is for sale through Webbs Estate Agents at £165,000 with no chain.

Being close to all local amenities, shops and schools, its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hallway, a lounge, dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, a bathroom and a driveway.

The lounge has a feature fireplace with a gas fire, a dining room with French doors to the rear garden and a storage cupboard.

The kitchen has a window overlooking the rear, wall, base and drawer units, working surface over, an inset single drainer sink, an integral oven, hob with an extractor hood over and a built-in fridge.

Contact 01922 663399.

TO LET

LOOK OUT FOR THE LATEST HOMES FOR SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

An Express & Star supplement
Express & Star

K. Stuart Swash

AUCTION - 28TH MARCH 2018

90 BURLAND AVENUE, WOLVERHAMPTON

Within a popular location, spacious semi, Two reception, kitchen, utility area, three bedrooms, bathroom, garaging facility, off-road parking, rear garden. EPC: E42

Guide: £90,000 / £95,000

VIEWING: FRIDAY & SATURDAY, 16th & 17th MARCH @ 10.30 a.m.

BUILDING PLOT
93 GOLDTHORN HILL, WOVERHAMPTON.

Large plot with Planning Permission for erection of a three bedroomed detached house, good location, generous plot depth.

Guide: £85,000 / £95,000

38 PENDEFORD AVENUE, CLAREGATE, WOLVERHAMPTON

Impressive detached ready for improvement, wide hall, two reception, large kitchen, three bedrooms, bathroom, two garages, store, long rear garden with return frontage approx. 180ft. to Aldersley Avenue EPC: E45

Guide: £155,000 / £165,000

VIEWING: FRIDAY & SATURDAY, 16th & 17th MARCH @ 11.15 a.m.

PLEASE NOTE: Viewing of all Lots at own risk. Viewings are at the times specified so, should you arrive late, you may find your viewing time is limited or that we have moved on in order to maintain the time schedule.

2, Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton | 01902 710626 / 424044 E-mail: swashauctions@btconnect.com | www.kstuartswash.co.uk

BOOT & SON

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PROPERTY AUCTION MONDAY 26TH MARCH AT 7.00PM

LOT 4

19 SMITH ROAD, WALSALL, WS2 9DJ

- Traditional built inner terraced house
- Brick and slate construction
- Convenient for Walsall town centre and junction 9 of M6 motorway
- Producing £5,200 per annum
- EPC rating G (20)

GUIDE PRICE £70,000 - £75,000

2 New Street, Merry Hill, Wolverhampton, WV3 7NW Semi det house, residential investment, regulated tenancy producing £4,680 PA. Guide £88,000-£94,000

41 Albert Road, Halesowen, B43 4SW Freehold residential investment, assured periodic tenancy producing £6,760 PA Guide £85,000-£95,000

Parcel of Freehold Lane Adj to 44 Huntington Terrace Road, Cannock, WS11 5HA Roughly rectangular parcel of freehold land. Guide £5,000+

Freehold Land Fronting Colliery Road, Rugeley, WS15 1QN Parcel of freehold land, part pasture & part mixed woodland Guide £55,000+

Parcel of Land Fronting Startley Lane with Return Frontage to Colliery Road, Rugeley, WS15 1QN Parcel of freehold land, part pasture & part woodland. Guide £45,000+

Land Rear of 77 Old Fallow Road, Cannock, WS11 5QL Good size plot extending to 0.22Ha or thereabouts—**Outline PP for 5 Det houses** Guide £275,000-£300,000

32 & 32a Princess Street, Chadsmoor, Cannock, WS11 5JS Ideal buy to let, Semi det house arranged as 2 self contained flats Guide £75,000+

125 Rugeley Road, Hazel Slade, WS12 0PG Detached bungalow **(potential for re-development subject to PP)** Guide £200,000-£250,000

Port Lane Cottage, Port Lane, Chillington, Brewood, WV9 5BH Detached cottage with benefit of PP for 2 storey extension to rear. Guide £250,000+

01543 50 54 54
www.bootandson.co.uk

CHARTERED SURVEYORS
MARRION & CO
ESTATE AGENTS

Tel: 01922 404446

212 High Street, Bloxwich, WS3 3LA

Paul Marrion - Partner

Kathy Marrion - Partner

www.marrion.co.uk

Energy Rating - TBC NEW

Victoria Avenue
Bloxwich
- Spacious Modern Detached Home
- Gas Central Heated & Double Glazed
- 2 Reception Rooms
- Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms
- Bathroom
- Driveway
- Rear Garden

£259,950

Energy Rating - TBC NEW

Lichfield Road
Shelfield
- End town house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Dining kitchen, lounge
- 3 bedrooms
- shower room/WC
- Gardens and parking
- NO ONWARD CHAIN

£130,000

Energy Rating - B NEW

Ashbourne Road
Bloxwich
- End town house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Front reception room
- rear dining room, kitchen
- 2 bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Parking and gardens
-

£120,000

Energy Rating - D NEW

Somerfield Road
Bloxwich
- Mid terrace house
- Gas centrally heated & double glazed
- Newly Installed Kitchen/Diner, Front Lounge
- 3 Bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Rear Off road parking
- Sorry No DSS, Pets or Smokers
- Available Now
- £180 Reference Fees Apply

£575

Energy Rating - D NEW

Station Place
Bloxwich
- End town house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, kitchen
- conservatory
- 3 bedrooms
- bathroom/WC
- Parking and Gardens

£130,000

Energy Rating - TBC NEW

Brooklands Avenue
Great Wyrley
- Semi detached house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, Kitchen
- 2 bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Gardens and driveway
- SORRY NO DSS, PETS OR SMOKERS
- £180 reference fee applies

£625

Energy Rating - TBC NEW

Woodall Street
Bloxwich
- Ideal Retirement Apartment
- Gas Heated
- PVCu Double Glazed
- Lounge
- Kitchen
- 2 Bedrooms
- Bathroom
- No Onward Chain

£74,950

Energy Rating - TBC NEW

Littleton Road
Willenhall
- End town house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Through lounge/diner, kitchen
- 3 bedrooms, bathroom and WC
- Mature Gardens
- NO ONWARD CHAIN
- Must Be Viewed

£95,000

Energy Rating - B

Mattesley Court
Bloxwich

40% SHARED OWNERSHIP ●●● NO ONWARD CHAIN ●●● Available for immediate occupation, this spacious Second Floor Apartment forms part of a modern retirement complex for the over 55's providing supported living with on site Catering, Residents Lounge, Court Manager, Hairdressing Salon, Lifts and Laundry Facilities. The under floor heated accommodation has PVCu double glazing and briefly comprises:- Entrance Hall with Storage Cupboard, Large Lounge with open plan Kitchen, 2 Double Bedrooms, Wet Room, Landscaped Gardens and ample Parking.

£30,000

Energy Rating - D

Stanley Street
Bloxwich

Offering some scope for further improvement/modernisation, this well priced and deceptively spacious end town house must be viewed to be appreciated! Situated close to all amenities, the PVCu double glazed and majority gas centrally heated accommodation briefly includes;- Entrance Hall/Stairs, Front Lounge, Rear Dining Kitchen, Guests Cloaks/WC, Landing, Three Bedrooms, Bathroom/WC, Off Road Parking and Good Sized Gardens with Substantial Workshop

£110,000

Energy Rating - D

Bloxwich Road
Leamore
- Traditional Mid Terraced House
- PVCu Double Glazed
- Gas Central Heating
- Two Reception Rooms
- Two Bedrooms
- Fitted Kitchen
- Downstairs Bathroom
- Rear Garden

£110,000

Energy Rating - C

Virola Court
Bloxwich
- Spacious Penthouse Apartment
- Allocated Parking
- Heated & Double Glazed
- Spacious Lounge, Fitted Kitchen
- 2 Double Bedrooms
- En-Suite, Family Bathroom
- Communal Gardens
- No Onward Chain

£115,000

Energy Rating - TBC

Field Road
Bloxwich
- Extended End Town House
- Gas Central Heated & Double Glazed
- 2 Reception Rooms
- Kitchen, Utility/Guests WC
- 3 Bedrooms
- Bathroom
- Driveway
- Rear Garden

£140,000

Energy Rating - D

Gurnard Close
West Midlands
- Semi detached house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, kitchen
- 2 bedrooms
- bathroom/WC
- Garage, drive
- gardens

£145,000

Energy Rating - B

Penmire Grove
Rushall
- Three Storey Town House
- PVCu double glazing & Gas Central Heating
- Fitted Kitchen, Rear Lounge/Diner
- 3 Bedrooms, en-suite
- Family Bathroom
- Rear Garden
- NO ONWARD CHAIN
- Must Be Viewed

£179,995

Energy Rating - D

Long Lane
Great Wyrley
- Traditional extended semi detached House
- 4 Bedrooms, Spacious Lounge
- Dining Room, Breakfast Kitchen
- Conservatory, Utility Room
- Downstairs W.C.
- Family Bathroom, Driveway
- Small Garage Rear Garden
- No Onward Chain

£224,950

Energy Rating - D

Selsdon Road
Turnberry

This immaculately presented detached home occupies a quiet head of cul-de-sac position on this sought after residential development known as Turnberry. Being most deserving of early internal viewing, the gas centrally heated and Gold Oak PVCu double glazed accommodation briefly includes;- Enclosed Storm Porch, Entrance Hall/Stairs, Front Lounge, Rear Dining Kitchen, Conservatory, Two Excellent Bedrooms, the Master having built in wardrobes, Fully Tiled Shower Room, Garage/Carport and Landscaped Gardens

£189,950

Energy Rating - C

Lydford Road
Bloxwich

Enjoying a quiet cul-de-sac-position on this ever popular residential estate known as Sefton Park, this deceptively spacious modern detached bungalow is just a few minutes walk from Bloxwich High Street and King George V Memorial Playing Fields. Being most deserving of an early internal inspection the Gas Centrally Heated and PVCu Double Glazed accommodation briefly comprises:- Enclosed Storm Porch, Entrance Hallway, Lounge, Breakfast Kitchen, Conservatory, Two Bedrooms, Shower Room, Tandem Garage with Utility Area, Driveway and well Maintained Fore and Rear Gardens.

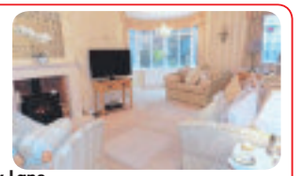
£249,950

Energy Rating - E

Stafford Road
Great Wyrley
- Traditional Cottage style detached house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- 2 reception rooms
- Farmhouse kitchen
- 3 bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Driveway, garden
- outbuildings

£250,000

Energy Rating - D



Stoney Lane
Bloxwich

Occupying an large corner plot with potential for extension (subject to gaining relevant permissions) this immaculately maintained traditional detached home is situated in sought after position along this well regarded residential road, within close proximity to all usual local amenities, this attractive detached bungalow is a must to view! The gas centrally heated and PVCu double glazed (where specified) accommodation briefly includes;- Entrance Hallway, Rear Lounge, Front Dining Room, Family Room, Kitchen, Conservatory, Guest WC, Three Bedrooms, Bathroom/WC, Garage, Large Driveway (with potential to create more parking) and mature gardens.

£365,000

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GOODCHILDS Estate Agents and Lettings

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Broadway, Walsall

- Two Bedroom Apartment
- New Build
- Communal Hallway with Lift
- Kitchen/Lounge
- Family Bathroom
- Double Glazing
- Allocated Parking Space
- Gas Central Heating
- No DHSS
- Rating:88

£595 PCM

Merton Way, Walsall

- Two Bedroom Top Floor Apartment
- central heating
- double glazing
- Lounge
- Fitted Kitchen
- En-Suite
- Allocated Off Road Parking
- DHSS Accepted
- EPC 80
- Near Walsall Town Centre

£525 PCM

Broadway, Walsall

- One Bedroom Apartment
- New Build
- Communal Hallway with Lift
- Lounge with Balcony
- Fitted Kitchen
- Double glazing
- Gas Central Heating
- Rating:88
- Sorry No DHSS
- Close to Walsall Town

£495 PCM

Broadway North, Walsall

- Over 60 Retirement Apartment
- New Build
- Ground Floor
- One Bedroom
- Walk in Shower Room
- Communal Lounge

£925 PCM

Lavender Grove, Walsall

- Three Bedroom Semi-Detached
- Gas Central Heating
- Lounge
- Dining Room
- Off Road Parking
- EPC 52

£500 PCM

Rowland Street, Walsall

- Two Bedroom Mid-Terraced
- Two Reception Rooms
- Galley Kitchen
- Ground Floor Shower Room
- Dining Room
- Double Glazing
- Central Heating
- Rear Garden
- DHSS Accepted
- EPC 58

£475 PCM

Thornbury Road, Walsall

- ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT
- Secure Communal Entrance
- Private Entrance Hall
- Lounge
- Fitted Kitchen
- Bathroom
- Electric Heating
- Communal Grounds
- Allocated Parking
- Sorry No DHSS

£475 PCM

Elmore Green Close, Bloxwich

- One Bedroom Ground Floor Flat
- Lounge
- Separate Kitchen
- odern Bathroom with Shower
- Built in Wardrobe
- Communal Gardens
- Double Glazing
- Electric Heating
- Sorry No DHSS, Pets or Smokers
- EPC 51

£450

Marton Court, Bloxwich

- Two Bedroom First Floor Apartment
- Lounge with French Doors
- Bathroom with Shower
- Kitchen
- Double Glazing
- EPC 71

£450 PCM

Marton Court, Bloxwich

- One Bedroom
- Bloxwich High Street
- Lounge
- Fitted Kitchen
- Communal Grounds
- Rating-68

£400 PCM

Crown Lofts, Marsh Street ,

- Studio Apartment
- located in Walsall Town Centre
- Access of the train station
- benefiting from underfloor heating
- balcony with extensive views
- Rating: 78

£430 PCM

Herondale, Hednesford

- cul-de-sac in a residential area
- open plan living room
- fitted kitchen
- electric heating
- ample communal parking areas
- EPC 65

£400 PCM

The Exchange, Bloxwich

- First Floor One Bedroom Flat
- Above Retail Premises
- Lounge/Kitchen
- Seperate W.C.
- Rating: 13
- DHSS Accepted

£325 PCM

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REDUCED

BLOXWICH
BEALEYS CLOSE

- 4 Bed Detached
- 3 Reception Rooms
- Breakfast Kitchen
- Conservatory
- Utility, Guests WC
- En-Suite Bathroom
- Double Garage
- Must Be Viewed

£310,000 OFFERS OVER

BLOXWICH
FARMDALE GROVE

- Stunning Home
- Popular Cul de Sac
- Through Hallway
- Guests WC.
- Breakfast Kitchen
- Lounge/Diner
- Playroom
- 3 Bedrooms

£175,000

BLOXWICH
STANLEY STREET

- Semi Detached
- Hallway, WC
- Lounge Diner
- Breakfast Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms
- Bathroom
- Rear Garden
- No Chain

£109,950 OFFERS OVER

ESSINGTON
THE OLDE SHOP

- Extended Cottage
- Sought After Location
- Stunning Kitchen
- Lounge WC
- Dining Room
- Double Garage
- Landscaped Gardens

£270,000

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TURNBERRY
WETHERBY ROAD

- Semi Detached
- Hallway
- Lounge
- Dining Room
- Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms
- Bathroom
- No Chain

£165,000 OPEN TO OFFERS

BLOXWICH
CRESSWELL CRESCENT

- Fabulous Plot
- 3 Bed Semi
- Hall, Lounge
- Kitchen
- Bathroom
- Driveway
- No Chain

£134,950

BLOXWICH
LYDFORD ROAD

- Detached Bungalow
- Lounge
- Refitted Kitchen
- Utility Room
- 2 Double Bedrooms
- Generous Garage
- Viewing Recommended

£249,950

BLOXWICH
FIELD ROAD

- Detached Home
- Hallway, Lounge
- Dining Room
- Conservatory
- Kitchen, Utility
- 4 Bedrooms
- Bathroom
- Driveway, Garage

£229,950

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0121 289 3838

Auction
Thursday 12th April 2018 at 6.00pm Precisely

Banks's Stadium, Walsall Football Club, Bescot Crescent. Walsall. WS1 4SA

LOT TBC

Birmingham Road Walsall

By appointment through auctioneers

A truly substantial, late Victorian property offering spacious living accommodation, with a character and appeal seldom seen today. Occupying a most convenient situation with regular bus provision direct to Birmingham, together with ease of access on to all the regions motorways, the property will particularly suit the larger family or investment purchaser. The property has been well maintained by the current vendor, having recently installed Bathroom and Shower Room a recently refitted roof and newly installed gas boiler. The property affords gas central heating and demands viewing to appreciate the space and appeal within.

●Guide Price £240,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Burrowes Street Walsall

20th March 3pm

Situated in a popular residential area within walking distance of the town centre this flat is just of the Walsall ring road which offers a great transport link to the M6. The property is in need of slight modernisation throughout and would ideally be suited towards an investor.

●Guide Price £59,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Thetford Road Birmingham

By appointment through the auctioneers

A nicely presented three bedroom semi-detached home situated in a well regarded part of Great Barr. Accommodation briefly comprises lounge/diner, kitchen, three bedrooms and a bathroom.

●Guide Price £128,500 PLUS

LOT TBC

Walsingham Street Walsall

19th March 10am

This two bedroom terraced property is in need of little modernisation. The property is situated in a popular residential area within Chuckery and would make an ideal purchase for an investor.

●Guide Price £75,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Farmstead Close Walsall

By appointment through Auctioneers

Set in a quiet cul-de-sac, this modern semi detached property offers an ideal opportunity for a first time buyer or investor who is prepared to put in a little work to tidy it up. With gas fired central heating, the property is conveniently located for all amenities and is set back from the road behind a lawned foregarden with long driveway.

●Guide Price £85,500 PLUS

LOT TBC

Teddesley Street Walsall

19th March 11am

Situated within walking distance of Walsall town centre this semi detached property is ideally located. The property is in need of modernisation throughout but holds a lot of potential for a prospective purchaser.

●Guide Price £95,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Dalby Road Walsall

By appointment through Auctioneers

Situated in a quiet cul-de-sac, this modern semi detached property would make an ideal purchase for an investor or owner occupier. With the benefit of gas fired central heating and double glazing, the property offers potential for extension to the side.

●Guide Price £85,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Derwent Foundry Birmingham

By appointment through Auctioneers

Situated in a extremely desirable residential area this 1 bedroom 3rd floor apartment is ideally suited towards an investor. The property requires very little modernisation and with all amenities close at hand it comprises: Accomodation Lounge (4.6m x 3.9m), Bedroom One (5m x 2.5m), Bathroom (2.2m x 1.9m), Additional Room (2.3m x 1.9m) Buyers Premium of £750.00 plus v.a.t. (£900.00 inc vat) will be charged for this lot

●Guide Price £145,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Rosamund Street Walsall

By appointment through Auctioneers

Conveniently located in this popular residential area of Palfrey, this Victorian end terraced offers well planned and appointed living accommodation with the benefit of gas fired central heating and double glazing. Internal viewing is recommended to appreciate the accommodation.

●Guide Price £85,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Cherry Tree Avenue Walsall

19th March 10:30am

Set in a prominent position behind a deep lawned foregarden, this traditionally styled semi detached property is situated in a highly sought after residential area and would make an ideal purchase for an owner occupier or investment. With the benefit of gas fired central heating and double glazing, the property offers well appointed, well planned and extended living accommodation. All amenities are close at hand and viewing is highly recommended.

●Guide Price £130,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Adelaide Street Brierley Hill

By appointment through Auctioneers

Situated within a short distance of Brierley Hill centre, this traditionally styled Victorian mid terraced property is in need of full refurbishment and a bit of tlc. An ideal opportunity for investor/builder the property offers tremendous scope for further improvement for a buyer with the intention of re-sale or for letting.

●Guide Price £60,000 PLUS

LOT TBC

Winchester Drive Birmingham

By appointment through auctioneers

This three storey terraced property is ideally located just off the M6 and M42 which offers fantastic transport links. The property is in need of slight modernisation and would ideally be suited towards an investor.

●Guide Price £95,000 PLUS

●Guides are provided as an indication of each seller's minimum expectation. They are not necessarily figures which a property will sell for and may change at any time prior to the auction. Each property will be offered subject to a Reserve (a figure below which the Auctioneer cannot sell the property during the auction) which we expect will be set within the Guide Range or no more than 10% above a single figure Guide

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Victoria Avenue, Walsall

AUCTION

Guide Price £110,000

3	3
1	EPC G

Catches Drive, Bloxwich Walsall

NEW

Offers in the Region Of £225,000

2	4
2	EPC C

Calthorpe Road, Walsall

AUCTION

Guide Price £300,000

2	3
1	EPC E

Bloxwich Road, Walsall

NEW

Offers in the Region Of £110,000

2	2
1	EPC D

Ingram Road, Bloxwich Walsall

NEW

Offers in the Region Of £165,000

2	3
1	EPC E

Lydford Road, Bloxwich Walsall

NEW

Offers in the Region Of £249,950

1	2
1	EPC C

Wolverhampton Road, Pelsall Walsall

Offers in the Region Of £229,950

2	3
1	EPC D

Netley Road, Bloxwich Walsall

Offers in the Region Of £112,500

1	2
1	EPC G

Water Reed Grove, Walsall

Offers in the Region Of £145,000

1	3
1	EPC B

Fishley Lane, Lower Farm Bloxwich

£200,000 Offers

2	4
2	EPC D

Stag Hill Road, Walsall

NEW

£97,500 Offers

1	2
1	EPC D

Stamping Way, Bloxwich Walsall

£150,000 Offers

1	2
1	EPC B

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Hough Way, Essington, Wolverhampton
£299,950

1 | 4 | 3 | EPC B

Kington Close, Coppice Farm, Willenhall
OIXO £255,000

2 | 5 | 1 | EPC C

Roebuck Glade, Off Stroud Av, Willenhall
Roebuck Glade
£199,950

2 | 3 | 1 | EPC D

Pooles Lane, Short Heath, Willenhall
Pooles Lane
£195,000

2 | 1 | 3 | EPC D

Stubbington Close, Willenhall
Stubbington Close
£187,500

1 | 3 | 2 | EPC TBC

Burleigh Close, Summer Hayes, Willenhall
OIXO £170,000

1 | 3 | 1 | EPC F

Bloxwich Road South, Willenhall
Bloxwich Road South
£140,000

1 | 3 | 2 | EPC C

Walkers Fold, Short Heath, Willenhall
Walkers Fold
OIXO £125,000

1 | 2/3 | 1 | EPC D

Mill Street, Willenhall
Mill Street
£99,950

1 | 1 | 1 | EPC E

Temple Square, Willenhall
Temple Square
Guide Price £75,000

2 | 3 | 1 | EPC D

Fisher Street, Willenhall
Fisher Street
Guide Price £70,000

2 | 2 | 1 | EPC E

Forest Court, Lichfield Road, New Invention, Willenhall
Guide Price £63,000

1 | 2 | 1 | EPC C

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OIEO £125,000

WILLENHALL

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Three Storey Three Bed Terrace, Two Reception Rooms, Refitted Modern Kitchen, Utility & Guest WC, First Floor Bathroom, C/Heating & D/ Glazing, Enclosed Rear Garden

OIEO £117,000

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Well Presented Two Bedroom Semi, Modern Fitted Kitchen, Ground Floor WC, First Floor Shower Room, D/Glazing & C/ Heating, Off Road Parking, Great FTB or BTL

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WILLENHALL

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WALSALL

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OIEO 187,500

WILLENHALL

GLAISEDALE GR, WILLENHALL
Three Bed Semi, Lounge With Open plan Staircase, Modern Fitted Kitchen, Refitted Family Bathroom, C/ Heating & D/Glazing, Detached Hobby Room, Private Rear garden, Cul De Sac Location

OIEO £160,000

WILLENHALL

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4 Pets & Animals

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5 Business & Farming

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6 Property

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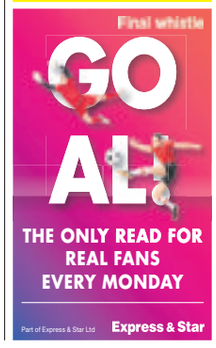

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9 Local Information

Public Notices

PUBLIC & LEGAL NOTICES

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Walsall Council, Planning, Engineering and Transportation
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Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) act 1990
Development Management Procedure Order 2015 (as amended)

The below applications have been made to the Walsall Council. Applications can be viewed at First Stop Shop, Civic Centre, Walsall or online www.walsall.gov.uk/planning. Representations can be made online, email: planningservices@walsall.gov.uk or in writing to Head of Planning, Engineering and Transportation, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1DG. Representations should be made within 21 days of the date of this notice. **Please note:** Your letter and personal details will form part of the planning file which is a public document and will be available for inspection at the Council Offices. The information may be released as part of a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

18/0187 RUHEL AHMED FOR: CHANGE OF USE TO A3 (RESTAURANTS AND CAFES) AND A5 (HOT FOOD TAKEAWAY) AT: 22, CRESSWELL CRESCENT, BLOXWICH, WALSALL, WS3 2UW

17/1707 Cardtronics UK Ltd trading as Cashzone FOR: RETROSPECTIVE: RETENTION OF ATM AND MODIFIED SECURITY ROLLER SHUTTER AT: STAR NEWS, 86 , BRADFORD STREET, WALSALL, WS1 1NU

17/1708 Cardtronics UK Ltd trading as Cashzone FOR: RETROSPECTIVE: DISPLAY OF INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED ATM FASICA ADVERTISEMENTS AT: STAR NEWS, 86 , BRADFORD STREET, WALSALL, WS1 1NU

18/0188 Jonathan Allsopp FOR: CHANGE OF USE OF GROUND LEVEL FROM SWEET SHOP (USE CLASS A1) TO FORM RECEPTION, WAITING AREA AND DISABLED TOILET. SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION TO FORM CONSULTING ROOM (USE CLASS D1). AT: 26, BRIDGE STREET, WALSALL, WS1 1HR

18/0094 FLOS Kitchen FOR: CHANGE OF USE FROM GYM D2 TO A1 COFFEE/SANDWICH SHOP AT: 1, POOL STREET, WALSALL, WS1 2EN

*18/0105 EDWARD KENNEDY FOR: TWO STOREY EXTENSION TO PROVIDE 4 NEW CLASSROOMS, RELOCATION OF EXTERNAL FIRE ESCAPE STAIRCASE, SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION TO DINING HALL AND PROVISION OF 8 ADDITIONAL PARKING SPACES. AT: MARY ELLIOT SCHOOL, LEAMORE LANE, WALSALL, WS2 7NR

*18/0106 WALSALL COUNCIL FOR: DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AND GARAGE WITH PROPOSED EXTENSION WHICH INCLUDES 3 CLASSROOMS AND A FRONT ENTRANCE EXTENSION TO THE EXISTING SCHOOL. AT: OLD HALL SCHOOL, BENTLEY LANE, WILLENHALL, WS2 7LU

The application marked * does not accord with the provisions of the development plan for the area.

GILLIAN MARY DORRELL (Deceased)
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(Ref: PST/DO/0001/0004) *TS24753*

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Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4SD
(Ref: LDJ/4169748P/Morton) *TS24743*

10 Personals

Personal

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MNA DIGITAL

First team manager Wayne Spicer

Black Country Rangers players celebrate a goal

The club's new badge

Black Country Fusion will come under the Black Country FC banner

Growing team flies the flag for Black Country

BLACK Country Rangers are on a mission to become a major player on the non-league scene.

While the action on the pitch may have been hampered by the recent wintry conditions, there has been plenty going on off the field at the ambitious West Midlands League club.

Rangers run one side at the moment, in the Premier Division, but are now expanding.

They have agreed a merger with Sunday League side Black Country Fusion which will result in five adults teams – including a ladies' side – while the club are in the process of setting up an academy.

For good measure, to complete the re-brand job, they have a new badge and will be known as Black Country Football Club.

Black Country Rangers will still exist as the first team but will be under the umbrella of BCFC.

First team boss Wayne Spicer provided the initial spark for the ambitious plans.

Spicer joined the club in a coaching capacity at the start of the season before taking on the assistant manager's role and then moving into the hot-seat when former boss Lewis Jones stepped down.

Challenge

He quickly identified the need to expand and now the club's hard-working board have taken up the challenge.

"I just felt that if we want to be sustainable and develop things in the future then we need to be a club," said Spicer.

"At the minute we are not a club we are just one team, Black Country Rangers.

"So we have decided to put a board together and add other teams to create one club.

"We are merging with Black Country Fusion and we are starting an academy for six to 12-year-olds and looking at adding other youth teams.

"We are looking to get other coaches on board and are going to be holding trials for different age groups.

"If we are going to be an aspiring semi-professional team that wants to go as high as possible, then we need youngsters coming through.

"We realise there is a massive gap between Sunday league and the level we play at, what we have to try to do is bridge that gap.

"Hopefully we can set up a reserve side in the future to help bridge the gap to the first team but top of the hit list at the moment is to get the academy up and running.

"This is something I was keen to drive forward and credit to everyone at the club because they have been working hard to get things off the ground.

"Pete Whitehouse, who is the head of the academy, has been working really hard and the chairman, Paul Garner, has been behind everything and really supportive.

"The merger with Black Country Fusion has resulted in Skye Stewart coming on board and she has been absolutely fantastic in all aspects.

"It will help build a more sustainable club instead of one team, as well as having 10 brains working on it instead of one."

Spicer added: "I'm very confident of how the merger will go, our main goal is to become one of the biggest clubs in the Black Country, playing football the right way."

Joining forces with Fusion has resulted in Skye Stewart become vice-chair of the club.

And Stewart is aiming high. She said: "This benefits both clubs, we're being ambitious and the merger can drive us forward instead of plodding along where we are. We want to stamp our mark on the Black Country.

"We want the teams to do well, become well known in the region and grow a future for children in the Black Country. It'll help with our sustainability," she added. "It's the start of our future and we want to take it as far as we can and be the next big club in the Black Country."

Chairman Garner is excited at what the future holds. He said: "This is something as a club we have been looking to do for a long time, we just needed to make sure we had the right people to meet this new challenge head on.

"Non-league football is about people sharing a vision and common goal and we feel bringing Skye on board, who has so much passion for the game and desire to improve on something successful she has already built, will only propel the club to greater heights.

"We are excited about the future and any new challenges that may lie ahead."

While the future is looking bright for the club, the present is not too shabby either.

Promotion

Spicer has wasted little time making his mark in only his second taste of management, having led West Bromwich United to promotion from Division Two and League Cup glory last season.

Rangers are unbeaten in 13 games since he took on the lead role and their eye-catching brand of football has even been featured on Soccer AM, who showed a clip of a stunning team goal scored by Kieron Clarke against Malvern Town.

A disappointing start to the season put paid to any realistic chance of challenging for the title, but a top four finish is still a possibility.

"We didn't have a great start but we have had a strong middle,"said Spicer.

"The best thing for me is that the boys have put their faith in me and bought into my philosophy. Credit to the boys for that.

"We have set high standards and Graham Ward (assistant boss) has added his knowledge and experience to the mix which will only help push us forward as a club."

SPORTING FEATURE

By Liam Keen

"This is something I was keen to drive forward and credit to everyone at the club because they have been working hard to get things off the ground."

Boxer in polished debut performance

DEBUTANT Damien Kiwior caught the eye on fight night at Walsall Town Hall. Alex Florence, Tividale's Ryan 'Stewart' Davies and Danny Ball of Kingswinford were all victorious on the 'Class of 2018' card.

Despite a number of cancellations, organisers BCB Promotions made sure the show went on. Ledbury's Florence, a 21-year-old super lightweight, put Czech Republic's Jan Korec to the sword early, referee Kevin Parker bringing proceedings to an end in the first round.

Davies recorded a first career stoppage, in four rounds over Birmingham's Myles Vale, while super welterweight Ball recorded a 39-38 victory after being taken the distance by seasoned Bolton fighter Chris Jenkinson.

Topping the bill was Poland's decorated amateur Kiwior, making his eagerly-awaited professional debut. He looked comfortable throughout his four round contest with Bulgaria's Anatoli Lyubenov and recorded a 40-36 victory. A moment's reflection, and a collection, was held in memory of Reagan Asbury who died outside the venue in October.

Princess Royal unveils uni's fitness facility

A NEW Sport & Fitness Club at the University of Birmingham has been officially unveiled by HRH the Princess Royal. She unveiled a plaque and delivered a speech as part of a formal opening ceremony.

The University of Birmingham's Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Eastwood welcomed the Princess to the new facility before she was introduced to Chancellor Lord Bilimoria of Chelsea, Pro-Chancellor Ed Smith, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Myra Nimmo and Director of Sport Zena Wooldridge OBE.

The royal visitor met students, athletes and staff and was given a tour of the facility, led by Zena Wooldridge, with visits to the 50m swimming pool, fitness studios, squash courts, the indoor multi-purpose arena and sports hall, climbing wall and performance centre.

The Sport & Fitness Club opened its doors to students, staff and the community in May 2017, providing a new gateway to the University's iconic Edgbaston campus.

Gavin gutted as plug pulled on title bout

BIRMINGHAM boxer Frankie Gavin's hopes of a world title fight later this month have been left on the canvas by the loss of a major sponsor.

The show at the Genting Arena continues with a strong line-up including four title bouts. But Gavin said he was devastated at losing the chance to fight for a world title. He was due to face African Bethuel Ushona for the vacant IBO Welterweight World title on Saturday March 24.

But the team behind his big night – billed as 'Now or Never' – have been forced to pull the headline fight after a major sponsor failed to materialise. The show goes on with a full undercard promoted by Black Country Boxing.

Gavin said: "I am absolutely gutted. To have the opportunity to win a belt and decent purse snatched away from me has left me devastated."

Kevin Baker, of BWI Promotions who were hosting Gavin's fight, said the team was hopeful of finding another option for him in the spring. Tickets are still available at theticketfactory.com but anyone who has bought a ticket for Gavin can obtain a refund by contacting their point of purchase.

Sport

Expanding team flying the Black Country flag

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Tipton hold on for win over rivals

Darlaston (1874) 0 Tipton Town 1

AFTER yet another enforced two week lay-off Darlaston Town (1874) returned to league action at the Paycare Ground, but were beaten by Tipton Town.

Before the match a minute's applause was held for ex-Darlaston player Nigel Dicken who unfortunately passed away after a long illness. Nigel played for the club in the early 1990s and was part of the first team ever to win the Birmingham County FA Vase in consecutive seasons. All 119 spectators, club officials and Vvolunteers from both clubs stood and paid their respects.

Three minutes in and Darlaston had the first of 11 attempts on goal with Tyrone Clarke-O'Connell attacking down the right, with his effort forcing keeper Alatalo into a low save gathered at the second attempt. Darlaston put the visitors under pressure for the first 10 minutes the visitors conceding two corners in quick succession.

However, Tipton took the lead in the 20th minute after a series of throw ins on the left-hand side, poor defending assisted central midfielder and ex-Darlaston player Sam Heston cut in from the left to unleash a superb strike beating keeper Morris Lowe to his right.

Although Tipton had taken the lead Darlaston didn't panic they still continued to try and play from keeper Morris at every opportunity.

Darlaston's best chance of the game came five minutes into the second half another Sam Giles' run down the right ended in an "around the corner" ball to Leon Taylor whose well weighted square ball found top scorer Scott Broadway in the centre of an empty goal four yards out, his effort somehow found its way over the bar and the chance was gone.

Mothers can now lace up their boots

A NEW initiative has been set up in Walsall to enable women to have fun, keep fit and make friends through football.

In 2017, Staffordshire saw more than 160 ladies aged between 30 and 67, lace up their boots to begin or return to football in a fun and enjoyable environment. The introduction of the Staffordshire FA Ladies Over 30s League was a key contributor to this success.

Staffordshire FA has now launched Pelsall Villa Colts Mums Play Football Centre in Pelsall. The programme is designed to allow all ladies the opportunity to try football for the first time.

Bethan Woolley, Staffordshire FA Football Development Officer said: "We are really excited to create further opportunities for a previously unengaged audience."

Sessions will take place on a Tuesday night, starting on April 3 from 6pm, at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall.

Cost is £3 per session. Call Luke Machen on 07814 743479

Lionhearts roar to a whitewash

DARLASTON'S Benjamin Whittaker was a part of the the British Lionhearts team that rolled over Italia Thunder by a whitewash in the World Series of Boxing.

Whittaker was making his WSB debut and comprehensively defeated Guiseppe Perguino in a middleweight contest.

The WSB allows boxers to compete in pro-style contests, endorsed by England Boxing and organised by the Amateur International Boxing Association.

Under tournament rules, each fighter is bare-chested and without a headguard, over five three-minute rounds. Teams meet at five weights, with the winner decided on bouts won.

Whittaker featured in the fourth fight at Liverpool's Echo Arena, live on BoxNation, and had the beating of Perguino, who was sent to the canvas for the finish.

The 19-year-old used his left jab well and followed up with right hands, one hook putting his opponent over before the referee stopped the contest in the fifth.

The three judges were all with Whittaker at the time of the TKO, two having it 40-35 and the other 40-36, as his preparations for the Commonwealth Games continue. He's set to campaign for his country at 75kg on the Gold Coast in Australia at the Games from April 4-15.

He's coached by his godfather Joby Clayton at Wolverhampton's Firewalker gym and is the No 1 ranked amateur middleweight in Britain.

A two-time and reigning England Elite national champion at club level, Whittaker has previously medalled at the Commonwealth Youth Games, taking silver at 75kg in Samoa in 2015.

OLD BOYS LEAD THE RUNNING

POPULAR former players Adrian Viveash and Dean Keates are front runners to be the next boss at Walsall.

It follows the sacking of Jon Whitney on Monday afternoon.

Whitney, who had been in charge of the Saddlers for two years, was relieved of his duties following crunch talks with the club's board.

It is understood poor results as well as the 47-year-old's turbulent relationship with supporters were the reasons behind his sacking. Saddlers went down 2-0 to high-flying Shrewsbury Town on Saturday, after a 3-0 home defeat to Rochdale days earlier.

With Whitney gone, thoughts immediately turned to who will replace the former Hull and Lincoln defender in the Saddlers hot-seat.

Betting

Former defender Viveash, who played more than 200 games for Walsall between 1995 and 2000, is leading the betting with bookmakers.

The 48-year-old is currently working as assistant manager at Coventry where he is helping out boss Mark Robins while his number two Steve Taylor recovers from a brain haemorrhage.

It is Viveash's record while a youth coach at Chelsea though that may be attractive to the Saddlers board.

The coach took Chelsea's under-18s to three consecutive FA Youth Cup finals, triumphing in 2012 and 2014.

He also won the UEFA Youth League in 2015 and successfully defended it the following year.

Keates, meanwhile, is also a name high on supporters' wish lists following the impressive job he has done at Wrexham.

Adi Viveash enjoyed a fine spell as youth team boss at Chelsea

Dean Keates has impressed with non-league Wrexham

Jon Whitney was relieved of his duties at Walsall on Monday after a bad run of results and growing unrest among the club's faithful

The former midfielder enjoyed two stints with the Saddlers as a player, amassing over 200 games in the process.

But he is now masterminding a promotion charge at the Dragon's with the Welsh side currently sitting fourth in the National League.

Outside the two former Walsall captains, Brian McDermott is third favourite with bookmakers.

The former Leeds and Reading manager is currently out of work and has previously managed Slough Town and Woking.

Other managers being linked to the vacancy include recently sacked Blues boss Steve Cotterill, former Rotherham manager Alan Stubbs and ex-Manchester United great Paul Ince. Walsall though are believed to want to take their time over the appointment with assistant coach Ian Sharps and development manager John Ward in charge of first-team affairs.

Despite Ward having vast managerial experience at Bristol Rovers, Cheltenham and Colchester, it is understood he is not interested in the role full-time.

Walsall just get over line with a bonus point in fight

Tamworth 28 Walsall 29

THE weather wasn't kind, leading to handling difficulties, but the hosts took an early lead with Danny Norton putting over a penalty.

Walsall hit back five minutes later from a lineout in their own half, eventually leading to Jordan McColl's 20m try-scoring run, with a conversion by Roger Weston.

From the restart, the hosts did well to turn over possession and then some crisp passing resulted in winger Jimmy Carroll going over near the corner flag. Although there was only five minutes left to play in the first half, there was still time for three more scores. Good positional kicks by Hennessey gave Walsall good attacking opportunities with the half ending 18-14 to Tamworth.

The second half saw Walsall immediately on the attack with Benson,Weaver Lucak and Pittaway making strong ball carries. This resulted in the hosts conceding penalties with Weston taking advantage with a fairly easy 20m kick.

Gathered

Errors allowed the hosts to establish a position deep in Walsall territory. Although his team were under pressure, scrum half Kieran Jackson, managed to fend off would be tacklers to score a converted try. The final quarter of the game saw Walsall have long periods of possession.

Eventually a quick flip pass by JB Lucak was gathered by Hal Gozukucuk.

The No8 proved to be unstoppable from 10 metres out as he dived over underneath the crossbar. Weston again added the conversion. This saw the game go into the final 10 minutes with the hosts holding a one point advantage. This was soon to be four points as Norton kicked a penalty.

The visitors' driving play was proving to be very effective. The Walsall pack powered towards the try-line and with the backs also joining in, it was Nico Watkins that got the final touchdown and the bonus point score.

This Saturday Walsall play their rearranged game against Spartans at Delves road. Kick off 3pm.

Walsall United were beaten 42 – 5 at Stourbridge Lions. Walsall 3rds had a 50 – 20 win over Stafford 3rds.

★★★

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